

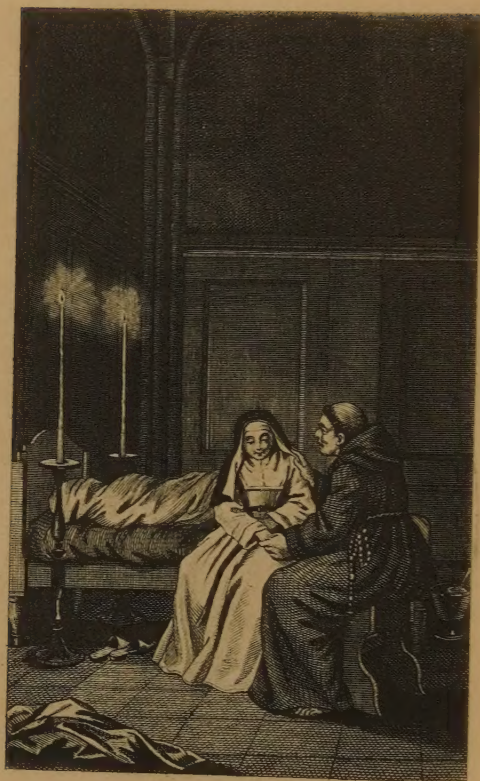
THE HEPTAMERON

OF THE TALES OF

Margaret Queen of Navarre

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME THE SECOND



The Heptameron

OF THE TALES OF

Margaret Queen of Navarre



NEWLY TRANSLATED FROM THE AUTHENTIC TEXT,
WITH AN ESSAY UPON THE HEPTAMERON

By GEORGE SAINTSBURY, M. A.



VOLUME II



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THE HEPTAMERON
OF
THE QUEEN OF NAVARRE.

THIRD DAY,

(Continued.)

NOVEL XXIV.

Ingenious device of a Castilian in order to make a declaration of love to a Queen, and what came of it.

THERE was at the court of a king and queen of Castile, whose names history does not mention, a gentleman of such good birth and comely person, that his equal there was not in all Spain. Every one held his endowments in admiration, but still more his eccentricity; for it had never been perceived that he loved or courted any lady, though there were many at the court who might have fired ice itself; but there was not one who could kindle the heart of Elisor, for so this gentleman

was named. The queen, who was a woman of great virtue, but a woman nevertheless, and not more exempt than the rest of her sex from that flame which is the more violent the more it is compressed—the queen, I say, surprised that this gentleman did not attach himself to any of her ladies, asked him one day if it was true that he was as indifferent as he appeared? He replied, that if she saw his heart as she saw his face, she would not have asked him that question. Eager to know what he meant, she pressed him so hard, that he confessed he loved a lady whom he believed to be the most virtuous in all Christendom. She did all she could by entreaties and commands to make him say who the lady was, but all to no purpose; till at last she pretended to be most deeply incensed against him, and swore that she would never speak to him again if he did not name the lady he loved so passionately. To escape from her importunities, he was forced to say, that he would rather die than do what she required of him; but at last, finding that he was about to be deprived of the honor of seeing her, and to be cast out of her favor for not declaring a truth in itself so seemingly that no one could take it in bad part, he said to her, trembling with emotion, “I cannot and dare not, madam, name the person; but I will show her to you the first time we go to the chase; and I am sure that you will say as well as I, that she is the most beautiful and most accomplished lady in the world.”

After this reply, the queen went to the chase sooner than she would otherwise have done. Elisor had notice of this, and prepared to wait on her majesty as usual. He had got made for himself a great steel mirror in the shape of a corslet, and this he placed on his chest, concealed beneath a mantle of black frieze, all bordered with purpl and gold. He rode a black horse very richly caparisoned. His harness was all gilded and enameled black in the Moorish fashion, and his black silk hat had a buckle adorned with precious stones, and having in the center, for a device, a Love concealed by Force. His sword, poniard, and the devices upon them, corresponded to the rest: in short, he was admirably accoutred; and he was such a good horseman, that all who saw him neglected the pleasures of the chase to see the paces and the leaps which Elisor made his horse perform. After escorting the queen to the place where

the toils were spread, he alighted and went to aid her majesty to dismount. At the moment she held out her arms, he opened his cloak, which covered his new cuirass, and said, "Be pleased, madam, to look here;" and without awaiting her reply he set her gently on the ground.

When the chase was ended, the queen returned to the palace without speaking to Elisor. After supper she called him to her, and told him he was the greatest liar she had ever seen, for he had promised to show her at the chase the lady of his love, and yet he had done no such thing; but for her part, she was resolved for the future to make no account of him. Elisor, fearing that the queen had not understood what he had said to her, replied that he had kept his word, and that he had shown her not only the woman, but also that thing in all the world which he loved best. Affecting ignorance of his meaning, she declared she was not aware that he had shown her any of her ladies. "That is true," replied Elisor; "but what did I show you when you dismounted from your horse?"

"Nothing," said the queen, "but a mirror you had on your chest."

"And what did you see in the mirror?"

"Nothing but myself."

"Consequently, madam, I have kept my word and obeyed you. Never did anything enter my heart but that which you saw when you looked at my chest. She who was there pictured is the only one whom I love, revere, and adore, not as a woman merely, but as an earthly divinity, on whom my life and death depend. The only favor I ask of you, madam, is, that the perfect passion, which has been life to me whilst concealed, may not be my death now that I have declared it. If I am worthy that you should regard me and receive me as your most impassioned servant, suffer me at least to live, as I have hitherto done, upon the blissful consciousness that I have dared to give my heart to a being so perfect and so worthy of all honor, that I must be content to love her, though I can never hope to be loved in return. If the knowledge you now possess of my intense love does not render me more agreeable to your eyes than heretofore, at least do not deprive me of life, which for me consists in the bliss of seeing you as usual. I now receive from you no other favor than that which is absolutely

necessary for my existence. If I have less you will have a servant the less, and will lose the best and most affectionate one you have ever had or ever will have."

The queen, whether it was that she might appear other than she really was, or that she might put his love for her to a longer proof, or that she loved another whom she would not forsake for him, or, lastly, that she was glad to have this lover in reserve in case her heart should become vacant through any fault which might possibly be committed by him whom she loved already, said to him, in a tone which expressed neither anger nor satisfaction, "I will not ask you, Elisor, although I know not the power of love, how you can have been so presumptuous and so extravagant as to love me; for I know that the heart of man is so little at his own command, that one cannot love or hate as one chooses. But since you have so well concealed your feelings, I desire to know how long you have entertained them?"

Elisor, looking in her beautiful face, and hearing her inquire about his malady, was not without hopes that she would afford him some relief; but, on the other hand, seeing the self-command and the gravity with which she questioned him, he feared he had to do with a judge who was about to pronounce sentence against him. Notwithstanding this fluctuation between hope and fear, he protested that he had loved her since her early youth; but that it was only within the last seven years he had been conscious of his pain, or rather of a malady so agreeable that he would rather die than be cured.

"Since you have been constant for seven years," said the queen, "I must be no more precipitate in believing you than you have been in declaring your love to me. Therefore, if you speak the truth, I wish to convince myself of it in a manner that shall leave no room for doubt; and if I am satisfied with the result of the trial, I will believe you to be such towards me as you swear that you are; and then, when I find you to be indeed what you say, you shall find me to be what you wish."

Elisor besought her to put him to any proof she pleased, there being nothing so hard that would not appear to him very easy, in the hope that he might be happy enough to convince her of the perfect love he bore her. He only waited, he said, to be honored with her commands.

"If you love me, Elisor, as much as you say," replied the queen, "I am sure that nothing will seem hard to you to obtain my good graces; so I command you, by the desire you have of possessing them, and the fear of losing them, that to-morrow, without seeing me more, you quit the court and go to a place where for seven years you shall hear nothing of me, nor I of you. You know well that you love me, since you have had seven years' experience of the fact. When I shall have a similar seven years' experience, I shall believe what all your protestations would fail to assure me of."

This cruel command made Elisor believe at first that her intention was to get rid of him; but, upon second thoughts, he accepted the condition, hoping that the proof would do more for him than all the words he could utter. "If I have lived seven years without any hope," he said, "under the painful necessity of dissembling my love, now that it is known to you, and that I have some gleam of hope, I shall pass the other seven years with patience and calmness. But, madam, since in obeying the command you impose upon me, I am deprived of all the joy I have ever had in the world, what hope do you give me that, at the end of seven years, you will own me for your faithful servant?"

Drawing a ring off her finger, "Let us cut this ring in two," said the queen; "I will keep one half and you the other, in order that I may recognize you by that token in case length of time makes me forget your face."

Elisor took the ring, divided it in two, gave the queen one half, and kept the other. Then, taking leave of her, more dead than those who have already given up the ghost, he went home to give orders for his departure. Sending his whole retinue to the country, he went away with only one attendant to a place so lonely and sequestered, that none of his relations and friends had any tidings of him for seven years. How he lived during that time, and what sorrow absence made him endure, are things beyond my telling; but those who love can be at no loss to conceive them.

Precisely at the end of seven years, and at the moment when the queen was going to mass, a hermit with a long beard came to her, kissed her hand, and presented to her a petition, which she did not peruse at once, though her custom was to receive

all the petitions that were presented to her, however poor were the people who preferred them. When mass was half said, she opened the petition, and found enclosed in it the half of the ring she had given to Elisor. This was an agreeable surprise for her, and before she read the paper she ordered her almoner to bring her straightway the hermit who had presented the petition. The almoner sought for him in all directions, but all he could learn was, that he had been seen to mount and ride away, but no one could tell which way he had gone. While awaiting the return of her almoner, the queen read the petition, which turned out to be a letter, composed in the best possible manner, and but for the desire I feel to make it intelligible to you, I should never have ventured to translate it; for I must beg you to understand, ladies, that the Castilian is better adapted than the French tongue to express the emotions of love. The letter was as follows :

“Time, a mighty teacher, gave me perfectly to know the nature of love. Time was afterwards assigned me, that the incredulous one might see by my protracted woe what love could not convince her of. Time hath shown me on what foundation my heart built its great love. That foundation was your beauty, which concealed great cruelty. Time teaches me that beauty is nothing, and that cruelty is the cause of my weal. Exiled by the beauty whose regards I so yearned for, I have come to be more conscious of your extreme unkindness. I obey your cruel order, however, and am perfectly content to do so; for time has had such pity on me that I have wished to return to this place to bid you, not a good day, but a last farewell. Time has shown me love just as it is, poor and naked; and I have no sense of it except regret. But time has likewise shown me the true love, which I have known only in that solitude where for seven years I have been doomed to mourn in silence. Through time I have come to know the love that dwells on high, at sight of which the other love vanishes, and I have given myself wholly to the one, and weaned my affections from the other. To that better love I devote my heart and my body, to do suit and service to it and not to you. When I served you, you esteemed me nothing. I now give you back entirely the love you put into my heart, having no need either of it or of you. I take my leave of cruelty, pain, torment, scorn, hatred, and the

burning fire with which you are filled, no less than you are adorned with beauty. I cannot better bid farewell to all woes and pains and intolerable distresses, and to the hell of the amorous woman, than in bidding farewell to you, madam, without the least prospect that wherever you or I may be we shall ever look upon each other more."

This letter was not read without tears and incredible surprise and regret. Indeed, the queen could not but feel so keenly the loss of a servant who loved her so perfectly, that not all her treasures, nor even her crown, could hinder her from being the poorest and most miserable princess in the world, since she had lost that which no wealth could replace. After hearing mass, she returned to her chamber, where she gave utterance to the lamentations her cruelty had merited. There was no mountain, rock, or forest to which she did not send in quest of the hermit; but he who had taken him out of her hands hindered him from falling into them again, and removed him to Paradise before she could discover his retreat in this world.

This example shows that no one can tell what can do him harm only and no good. Still less, ladies, should you carry distrust and incredulity so far as to lose your lovers, through desiring to put them to too severe a proof.

"All my life long, Dagoucin," said Geburon, "I have heard the lady in question spoken of as the most virtuous woman in the world; but now I regard her as the most cruel that ever lived."

"It seems to me, however," said Parlamente, "that she did him no such great wrong, if he loved her as much as he said, in exacting from him seven years of trial. Men are so accustomed to lie on these occasions, that one cannot take too many precautions before trusting them—if they are ever to be trusted."

"The ladies of our day," said Hircan, "are wiser than those of time past; for in seven days' trial they are as sure with regard to a lover as the others were in seven years."

"Yet are there those in company," said Longarine, "who have been wooed for seven years without ever being won."

"That is true," said Simontault; "but with your leave they ought to be classed with the ladies of bygone times, for in the modern class they would not be received."

"After all," said Oisille, "Elisor was greatly indebted to the queen, since she was the cause of his giving his heart entirely to God."

"It was great luck for him," said Saffredent, "to find God in his way, for crossed as he was I wonder he did not give himself to the devil."

"When your lady ill-used you," inquired Ennasuite, "did you give yourself to such a master?"

"Thousands of times; but the devil would never take me, seeing that the tortures of hell were less than those she made me suffer, and that there is no devil more insupportable than a woman who is passionately loved and will not love in return."

"If I was in your place and entertained such sentiments," said Parlamente, "I would never love a woman."

"Such has always been my unfortunate propensity," replied Saffredent, "that when I cannot command I think myself very happy in being able to serve. But tell me, pray, in conscience, now, do you applaud this princess for such excessive rigor?"

"Yes," said Oisille, "for I believe she did not choose either to love or be loved."

"That being the case," said Simontault, "why give him hopes after seven years should have passed?"

"You are right," said Longarine; "and I think that ladies who do not choose to love should cut the matter short at once, and hold out no hopes to their suitors."

"Perhaps," said Nomerfide, "she loved another who was not so worthy as Elisor, and preferred the worse man to the better."

"It is my belief," said Saffredent, "that she was glad to keep him in play, that she might have him ready to her hand whenever she cast off the lover she then preferred to him."

"I see plainly," said Oisille, "that as long as the conversation runs upon this topic, those who do not like to be treated harshly will say everything bad they can of us; so be pleased, Dagoucin, to give your voice to some one."

"I give it to Longarine," said he, "being assured that she will tell us something novel, and speak the very truth without sparing either men or women."

the queen, since she was the cause of his giving his heart
and his to God."

himself to the devil.

"When your lady ill-used you, my poor man, did
you give yourself to such a master?"

"Thousands of times: but the devil would not let me
suffer that the tortures of hell were less than those which
he made me suffer, and that there is no devil more insupportable
than a woman who is passionately loved and will not love in
return."

*"The Advocate's Wife Attending on the
Prince."*

FROM AN ORIGINAL BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE

keep him in play, that she might have him ready to her hand



“Since you have such a good opinion of my sincerity,” said Longarine, “I will relate an anecdote of a great prince who surpassed in endowments all the princes of his time. Permit me also to remark, that falsehood and dissimulation are things which should be least of all used, unless in a case of extreme necessity. They are a very ugly and disgraceful vice, especially in princes and great lords, whom truth becomes still more than other men. But there is no prince in the world, however glorious or rich he may be, who does not acknowledge the empire of love, and submit to its tyranny. Indeed, that arrogant god disdains all that is common, and delights only in working miracles every day, such as weakening the strong, strengthening the weak, making fools of the wise, and knowing persons of the ignorant, favoring the passions, destroying reason, and, in a word, turning everything topsyturvy. As princes are not exempt from it, no more so are they from the necessity in which they are put by the desire of amorous servitude. Thence it comes that they are forced to use falsehood, hypocrisy, and feigning, which, according to Maitre Jean de Meun, are means for vanquishing enemies. Though conduct of this nature is laudable in a prince, though it be censurable in all other men, I will recount to you the device employed by a young prince who tricked those who are used to trick all the world.”

NOVEL XXV.

Cunning contrivance of a young Prince to enjoy the wife of an advocate of Paris.

THERE WAS in Paris an advocate more esteemed than any nine others in his profession ; and as his knowledge and ability made him sought by all clients, he became the richest of all the men of the gown. Now, seeing that he had no children by his first wife, he thought he should have some by a second ; for though he was old, he had, nevertheless, the heart and the hope of a young man. He made choice of a Parisian of eighteen or nineteen, very handsome in face and complexion,

and handsomer still in figure and plumpness. He loved her and treated her as well as possible; but he had no children by her any more than by his first wife; which the fair one at last took sorely to heart. As youth cannot carry the burden of care very far, the advocate's young wife resolved to seek elsewhere the pleasure she did not find at home, and used to go to balls and feasts, but this she did, nevertheless, with such outward propriety and so much caution, that her husband could not take offence, for she was always with those ladies in whom he had most confidence.

One day, when she was at a wedding entertainment, there happened to be present a young prince, who told me the story, and forbade me to name him. All I can tell you is, that there never was, and never will be, I think, a prince in France of finer person and demeanor. The eyes and the countenance of the advocate's lady inspired the prince with love. He spoke to her so well and with such grace, that she took pleasure in his discourse, and ingenuously owned to him that she had long had in her heart the love for which he craved, and begged he would spare himself the pains of trying to persuade her to a thing to which love had already made her consent at mere sight. The frankness of love having bestowed on the prince what was well worth the pains of being won by time, he failed not to thank the god who favored him; and he plied his opportunity so well, that they agreed there and then upon the means of seeing each other in less crowded company. The time and the place being assigned, the prince appeared punctually, but in disguise, that he might not compromise the honor of the fair one. As he did not wish to be known by the rogues and thieves who roam by night, he had himself escorted by some trusty gentlemen, from whom he separated on entering the street where the lady resided, saying to them, "If you hear no noise within a quarter of an hour, go away, and return about three or four o'clock." The quarter of an hour having expired, and no noise having been heard, the gentlemen withdrew.

The prince went straight to the advocate's house, and found the door open as he had been promised, but on going up the staircase he met the advocate with a candle in his hand, who saw him first. Love, however, which gives wit and boldness

in proportion to the crossings and thwartings it occasions, prompted the prince to go up at once to the advocate and say to him, "You know, master advocate, the confidence which I and all my house repose in you, and that I regard you as one of my best and most faithful servants. I am come to see you privately, as well to recommend my affairs to you as to beg you will give me something to drink, for I am very thirsty, and not let anybody know that I have been here. When I quit you I shall have to go to another place where I should not like to be known."

The poor man, delighted with the honor the prince did him by this familiar visit, begged him to enter his room, and told his wife to prepare a collation of the best fruits and the most exquisite confections she could find; which she did right gladly, with all possible daintiness. Though she was in kerchief and mantle, and appeared to more than usual advantage in that *négligé*, the prince affected not to look at her, but talked continually about his business to her husband, who had always had the management of it. Whilst the wife knelt before the prince to present him some confections, and the husband was going to the buffet to fetch him something to drink, she found time to tell him not to fail, on departing, to enter a *garderobe* on the right, where she would soon join him. When he had drunk, he thanked the advocate, who wished by all means to accompany him; but this the prince would not allow, assuring him he was going to a place where he had no need of company. Then turning to the wife he said, "I will not deprive you of your good husband, who is one of my old servants. You are so happy in having him that you have reason to thank God. You must serve and obey him well; and if you did otherwise you would be very ungrateful." So saying, he went out, shut the door after him, that he might not be followed to the staircase, and entered the *garderobe*, where the fair one joined him as soon as her husband was asleep. She took him into a cabinet as elegant as could be, but in truth there was nothing in it handsomer than he and she; and I doubt not that she kept word with him as to all she had promised. He left her at the hour he had told his people, and found them at the place where he had desired them to wait for him.

As the intrigue was of long duration, the prince chose a shorter way to go to the advocate's; this was to pass through a monastery. He managed matters so well with the prior, that every night the porter opened the door for him towards midnight, and did the same when he returned. The advocate's house not being far from the monastery, he took no one with him. Notwithstanding the prince led the life I have described, still he loved and feared God, so true it is that man is a whimsical mixture of good and evil, and a perpetual contradiction. On his way to the advocate's he only passed through the monastery, but on his return he never failed to remain a long time at prayer in the church. The monks seeing him on his knees as they went to matins, or returned from them, believed he was the most pious of men.

The prince had a sister who was much in the habit of frequenting that convent. As she loved her brother above all men, she used to commend him to the prayers of all the good people she knew. One day when she was thus speaking for him with great earnestness to the prior of this monastery, the good father replied, "Why, madam, what is this you ask of me? You name the very man above all others to whose prayers I most desire to be myself commended; for if he is not pious and righteous, I never expect to see one that is so." Thereupon he quoted the text which says that "Blessed is he who can do evil, and doeth it not." The sister, who longed to know what proof the prior had of her brother's sanctity, questioned him so earnestly that he said to her, as if he was revealing a secret of the confessional, "Is it not a marvellous and goodly thing to see a young and handsome prince abandoning pleasures and repose to come frequently to our matins? He does not come like a prince who seeks to be honored of men, but quite alone like a simple monk, and he goes and hides himself in one of our chapels. This devotion so confounds my brethren and myself, that we do not think ourselves worthy to be called men of religion in comparison with him?"

The sister did not know what to think of this; for though her brother was very mundane, she knew, nevertheless, that he had a good conscience, that he believed in God and loved him much; but she could never have imagined that he would make a practice of going to church at that hour. As soon as she

saw him, she told him what a good opinion the monks had of him. He could not help laughing, and in such a manner, that she, who knew him as she did her own heart, readily guessed that there was something concealed under this pretended devotion. She teased him so much that at last he told her the whole truth as you have heard from me, and as she did me the honor to relate it to me.*

* Francis I. is the young prince who figures in this novel. The same story has been told of him, with additional circumstances, by some historians and others. It is thus related by a physician named Louis Guyon, sieur de la Nauche, who flourished at the end of the 16th century. "Francis I. was enamored of a lady of great beauty and great grace, the wife of an advocate of Paris, whom I will not name, for he has left children in high estate, and who are persons of good repute. The lady would never comply with the king's desires, but on the contrary repulsed him with many rude words, which hurt him sore. Knowing this, some courtiers and royal pimps told the king he might take her authoritatively and by the power of his royalty. One of them actually went and said this to the lady, who reported it to her husband. The advocate saw plainly that they must quit the realm, and that, moreover, they should find it very hard to escape, unless they obeyed. Finally the husband allowed his wife to comply with the king's desire; and that he might be no hindrance, he pretended to have business in the country for eight or ten days. Meanwhile he remained concealed in Paris, frequenting the brothels, trying to catch the pox to give to his wife, that the king might take it from her. He quickly got what he sought, infected his wife, and she the king, who gave it to several other women with whom he conversed; and he never could be thoroughly cured, for all the rest of his life he was unhealthy, sad, peevish, and inaccessible." (*Diverses Leçons de Louis Guyon, sieur de la Nauche*. Lyon, 1610, t. II, p. 109.) Brantôme also speaks of the malady contracted by the king through his gallantries, and says that it shortened his life; but he does not mention any woman in particular, or allude to the story of the advocate's wife. "Many have thought that she was no other than 'La Belle Féronnière,' so called because she was married to an advocate of the Le Féron family, many members of which were distinguished in the bar of Paris."

"We must, then," say the Bibliophiles Français (though for our own part we cannot see the force of the inference, based as it is upon nothing more absolute than a *many have thought*), "we must then number among apocryphal anecdotes the last and vilest part of the adventure of the advocate of Paris. What is true, Margaret has made known to us; modern historians, even those who have shown themselves most unfavorable to Francis I., have not reproduced the fact stated by Louis Guyon. M. Genin, editor of Margaret's letters, has even published the postscript of a letter of Cardinal d'Armagnac, which proves that at least a year before his death the king was in perfect health. (*See Lettres de Marguerite d'Angoulême*, &c., 1841, 8vo. p. 473.)

You see by this, ladies, that there are no advocates so crafty, or monks so shrewd, but that they may be tricked in case of need, when one loves well. Since, then, love teaches how to trick the tricksters, how much reason have we to fear it, we who are poor simple creatures?

"Though I guess pretty well," said Geburon, "who is the hero of this tale, I cannot help saying that he is to be praised for having kept the secret; for there are few great lords who give themselves any concern either about the honor of women or public scandal, provided they have their pleasure. Frequently, even, they act in such a manner as to make people believe more than the truth."

"It would be well," said Oisille, "if all young lords followed this example, for often the scandal is worse than the sin."

"You may well believe," said Nomerfide, "that the prayers he offered up in church were very sincere and very acceptable to God."

"That is not a question for you to decide," said Parlamente; "for, perhaps, his repentance was such on his return from his assignation, that his sin was forgiven."

"It is very difficult," said Hircan, "to repent of a thing that gives such pleasure. For my part, I have often confessed, but hardly repented it."

"If one does not repent, it were better not to confess," observed Oisille.

"Sin displeases me, madam," rejoined Hircan; "I am vexed at offending God; but pleasure pleases me."

"You would be very glad, you and others like you," remarked Parlamente, "that there were neither God nor law but what agreed with your own inclination."

"I confess," said Hircan, "I should be glad if my pleasures were as pleasing to God as they are to me. In that case, I would often give matter for rejoicing."

"You will not make a new God, however," said Geburon;

Thus is annihilated the ignoble accusation of a shameful disease which should have hastened the death of Francis I."

In Grammont's Memoirs it is related that the Duke of York, afterwards James II., was the victim of the same sort of revenge on the part of a jealous husband as that attributed to the advocate of Paris. There is nothing new under the sun.

“and so the best thing we can do is to obey the one we have. But let us leave these disputes to theologians, and see to whom Longarine will give her voice.”

“To Saffredent,” said Longarine, “on condition that he tells us the finest tale he can recollect, and that he is not so intent on speaking ill of women as not to do them justice when he can say anything to their advantage.”

“With all my heart,” said Saffredent. “I recollect, quite *à propos*, a story of a loose woman and a staid one; so you may choose whichever example of the two you prefer. You will see from this story that love makes bad acts be done by persons of bad heart; it also makes people of worth do things deserving of praise; for love is good in itself, but the depravity of the individual often makes it take a new title, such as lascivious, light, cruel, or vile. You will see, nevertheless, from the tale I am about to tell, that love does not change the heart, but makes it appear such as it is: wanton in the wanton, sober in the sober.

NOVEL XXVI.

By the advice and sisterly affection of a virtuous lady the lord of Avannes was weaned from his dissolute amours with a lady of Pampeluna.

IN the time of king Louis XII., there was a young lord named Monsieur d'Avannes, son of Monsieur d'Albret, the brother of John, king of Navarre, with whom d'Avannes usually resided. This young lord was so handsome, and had such an engaging demeanor at the age of fifteen, that he seemed to be made only to be beloved and admired; and so he was by all who saw him, and above all, by a lady who lived in Pampeluna, in Navarre, and was married to a very wealthy man, with whom she lived happily. Though she was but three-and-twenty, yet as her husband was nearly fifty, she dressed so modestly that she had more the appearance of a widow than of a married woman. She was never seen at weddings or festivities but with her husband, whose worth she prized so highly, that she preferred it to the good looks of all other men. The husband,

on his side, knew her to be so discreet, and had so much confidence in her, that he entrusted all the affairs of the house to her prudence.

This rich man and his wife were one day invited to the wedding of one of their female relations. D'Avannes was present to do honor to the bridal, and also because he was fond of dancing, in which he acquitted himself better than any man of his day. When dinner was over and the ball began, the rich man begged D'Avannes to dance. The latter asked with whom he would have him dance: whereupon the rich man, taking his wife by the hand, presented her to D'Avannes, and said, "If there was a handsomer lady in the room, monsieur, or one so much at my disposal, I would present her to you as I do this one, begging you, monsieur, to do me the honor to dance with her." The prince gladly complied; and he was still so young, that he took more pleasure in dancing and skipping than in gazing on ladies' charms. It was not so with his partner, who paid more attention to the handsome figure and good looks of her cavalier than to the dance; but she took care not to let this appear.

Supper time being come, M. d'Avannes took leave of the company and retired to the château. The rich man escorted him thither, mounted on his mule, and said to him on the way, "Monsieur, you have to-day done so much honor to my relations and myself, that I should be ungrateful if I did not make you every offering in my power. I know, monsieur, that lords like you, who have strict and closehanded fathers, have often more need of money than we, who, with our small retinue and good management, do nothing but amass. God, who has given me everything that could be desired in a wife, has thought fit to leave me still something to wish for in this world, since I am deprived of the joy which fathers derive from children. I know, monsieur, that it does not belong to me to adopt you; but if you please to regard me as your servant, and confide your little affairs to me, as far as a hundred thousand crowns may go, you shall never want for aid in your need."

M. d'Avannes was very glad of this offer, for he had just such a father as the other had mentioned; and after thanking his generous friend, he called him his father by alliance.

Thenceforth the rich man was so fondly attached to M. d'Avannes, that he failed not to ask him every morning and evening if he wanted anything ; and he made no secret of this to his wife, who was much pleased with it. M. d'Avannes never afterwards wanted anything he could desire. He often went to see his father by alliance, and eat with him ; and when he did not find him at home, the wife gave him whatever he asked for, and spoke to him so sagely, exhorting him to virtue, that he feared and loved her above all women in the world. For her part having the fear of God and honor before her eyes, she contented herself with seeing and speaking to him, which is enough for a virtuous love ; nor did she ever give him any indication from which he could conjecture that she entertained for him any other than a sisterly and Christian regard. About the age of seventeen, M. d'Avannes began to attach himself more to the ladies than he had been used to do ; and though he would more gladly have loved his own good lady than any other, the fear of losing her friendship hindered him from speaking, and made him fix his choice elsewhere.

He addressed himself to a lady near Pampeluna, who had a house in the town, and had married a young man whose ruling passion was horses, dogs, and hawks. For her sake he gave a thousand entertainments, such as tournaments, games, races, wrestling-matches, masquerades, balls, &c. ; but as the husband was of a jealous temper, and the lady's father and mother knew her to be fair and frolicsome, and were afraid of her tripping, they watched her so closely that all M. d'Avannes could do was to whisper a word or two in her ear at a ball, although he well knew, and this made the matter still more provoking, that nothing but time and place was wanting for the consummation of their mutual inclinations. He went to his good father, told him he had a mind to visit Notre Dame de Montferrat, and begged he would receive his whole retinue into his house, for it was his wish to go alone. This request was instantly granted ; but as love is a great prophet, and as the wife was under the influence of that power, she guessed the truth at once, and could not help saying to M. d'Avannes, "The Notre Dame you adore, monsieur, is not outside the walls of this town. Take care of your health, I beseech you." M. d'Avannes, who, as I have already said, feared and loved

her, blushed so much at these words, that he tacitly betrayed the truth, and went away.

After buying two handsome Spanish horses, he dressed himself as a groom, and disguised himself so well that no one could have known him. The husband of the wanton lady, being fond of horses above all things, saw the two belonging to M. d'Avannes, and immediately offered to buy them. The bargain being concluded, he took particular notice of the groom, and seeing that he managed the horses very well, asked if he would enter his service. M. d'Avannes at once agreed to do so, and said he was a poor groom, who could do nothing but take care of horses, but this he could do so well that his master would be satisfied with him. The gentleman gave him the charge of all his horses, and when he reached home told his wife that he was going to the château, and that he begged her to look after his groom and his horses. As much to please her husband as because she had no other recreation, the lady went to see the horses, and noticed the new groom, who seemed to her a good-looking man; but she did not recognize him. Seeing this, he made his obeisance to her in the Spanish fashion, took her hand and kissed it, and in so doing pressed it so strongly that she knew him, for he had often done the same thing in dancing with her. From that moment she thought of nothing but how she might contrive to speak with him in private; and this she did that very evening. She was invited to an entertainment to which her husband was to have taken her; but she feigned indisposition, and would not go. Her husband, not wishing to disappoint his friends, begged her, since she would not accompany him, to look after his dogs and his horses, and see that they wanted for nothing. This commission was most agreeable to her; but the better to play her part, she replied that, since he would not employ her in higher things, she would prove to him, by her care for the least, how much she desired to please him.

No sooner was her husband gone than she went to the stable, where she found that something was not as it should be. To set matters right, she gave so many orders to the men that she was left alone with the head groom, and, for fear of any one coming upon them, she told him to go into the garden

and wait for her in a little corner at the end of an alley, which he did with such haste that he had not time even to thank her. Having given her orders in the stables, she went to see the dogs, and busied herself so much about them, that it seemed as though from being mistress she had become servant. All this being done, she went back to her chamber, and complained so much of fatigue that she had to go to bed. All her women withdrew except one, in whom she specially confided; and this one she sent to the garden with orders to bring her the man she should find at the end of the alley. The chambermaid found the head-groom, brought him straightway to her mistress, and then mounted guard outside, to give warning should the husband return. M. d'Avannes, finding himself alone with his fair one, stripped off his groom's dress, his false nose and false beard, and not as a timorous groom, but in his own proper character, boldly stepped into bed to her without asking leave, and was received as the handsomest man of his time by the most wanton woman in the country. There he remained until the return of the husband, when he resumed his mask, and quitted the place he so cunningly usurped.

The husband, on entering his court-yard, found that his wife had carefully executed his orders, and thanked her for it. "I have only done my duty, my dear," she said. "It is true, that if one had not an eye on the varlets, you have not a dog but would be mangy, or a horse but would be out of condition; but as I know their laziness and your wishes, you shall be better served than ever you have been." The husband, who thought he had got the best groom in the world, asked her what she thought of him. "I assure you, monsieur," said she, "that he knows his business as well as any man you could find. Still he requires to be kept to his work, for he is the sleepest varlet I ever saw." The wedded pair were on better terms with each other than they had ever been, and the husband became quite cured of his jealousy, because his wife was now as attached to her household concerns as she had previously been fond of feasts, dances, and company. Formerly she used always to spend four hours at her toilette; but now she dressed very simply. Her husband, and those who did not know that a worse devil had driven out a lesser, extolled her for so happy a change. Meanwhile this virtuous-seem-

ing hypocrite led such a licentious life, that reason, conscience, order, or moderation had no longer any place in her. M. d'Avannes, being young and of a delicate constitution, could not long sustain all this ; but became so pale and thin that he had no need of a mask to conceal his identity. His extravagant love for this woman had so infatuated him, that he imagined he had strength to accomplish devoirs for which that of Hercules would not have been sufficient. Having fallen ill at last, and being teased by the lady, who was not so fond of him sick as sound, he asked for his discharge, which the husband granted with regret, making him promise to return as soon as he was recovered.

M. d'Avannes had no need of a horse for his departure, for he had only the length of a street to travel. He went at once to his good father's, and found there only his wife whose virtuous love for him had not at all decreased through absence. When she saw him so pale and thin, she could not help saying to him, "I do not know, monsieur, what is the present state of your conscience ; but I do not perceive that your pilgrimage has increased your plumpness. I am very much mistaken if your travels by night have not fatigued you more than those by day. If you had made the journey to Jerusalem on foot, you would have come back more sunburnt, but not so lean and weak. Recollect this ride, and pay no more devotions to such images, which, instead of resuscitating the dead, bring the living to death. I should say more to you, but I see that if you have sinned, you have been so punished that it would be cruel to add to your distress."

M. d'Avannes, more ashamed than penitent, replied, "I have heard, madam, that repentance follows close upon the fault. This I experience, to my cost ; and I pray you, madam, to excuse my youth, which is punished by the experience of the mischief it would not be warned against."

The lady changed the conversation, and made him lie down in a fine bed, where he remained for a fortnight, taking nothing but restoratives ; and the husband and the wife were so assiduous in their attentions, that one or other was always with him. Though he had committed the folly you have heard against the feelings and the advice of the excellent lady, she nevertheless continued to love him as before, in the hope that

when this great fire of youth had passed away, he would reform and come to love rightly, and then he would be all her own. During the fortnight he remained in her house, she talked so much and so well to inspire him with a love of virtue, that he began to hate vice, and to be disgusted with his fault.

Gazing one day on the virtuous lady, who appeared to him much handsomer than the wanton, and knowing her excellent qualities better than he had ever done, he banished all fear, and thus addressed her, "I see no better means, madam, of becoming as good as you would have me to be, than to turn my whole heart to the love of virtue. Pray tell me, madam, I beseech you, would you not have the goodness to give me all the aid in your power to that end?"

The lady, delighted to see him come to the point to which she wished to lead him, replied, "I promise you, monsieur, that if you love virtue as much as becomes a lord of your rank, I will spare nothing to render you all the services of which I may be capable."

"Remember your promise, madam," returned d'Avannes; "and consider that God, whom the Christian knows only by faith, has deigned to assume flesh like that of the sinner, in order that attracting our flesh to the love of His humanity, He might also attract our spirits to the love of His divinity, thus employing visible things to make us love the invisible. As this virtue which I wish to love all my life long has nothing visible about it except the outward effects it produces, it is necessary that it should assume some body, in order to make itself known to men. It has assumed that body, madam, in putting on yours, the most perfect it could have found. I own, therefore, that you are not only virtuous, but actually virtue itself; and I, who see that virtue shine beneath the veil of the most beautiful body that ever existed, wish to serve and honor it all my life, and to renounce for ever the love that is criminal and vain."

The lady, though no less delighted than surprised to hear him speak thus, was able completely to conceal her feelings, and said, "I will not take upon me, monsieur, to reply to your theology; but as I am much more disposed to fear the evil than to believe the good, I beg you will not address me in

a language which gives you so poor an opinion of those who are weak enough to believe it. I know very well that I am a woman like any other, and a woman that has so many defects that virtue would do something greater in transforming me into itself than in transforming itself into me, unless it wished to remain unknown to the world. No one would think of recognizing it under such a garb as mine. Howbeit, with all my faults, my lord, I still love you as much as a woman can and ought who fears God and cherishes honor; but this love shall not be declared to you until your heart is capable of the patience which a virtuous love requires. When that time comes, monsieur, I know what I shall have to tell you. Meanwhile, be assured that your welfare, your person, and your honor are dearer to me than to yourself."

Trembling, and with tears in his eyes, M. d'Avannes begged to be allowed to take a kiss as a pledge of her word, but she refused, saying that she did not choose to violate the custom of the country for him. Presently the husband arrived. "I am so much indebted, father," said D'Avannes, "to you and your wife, that I entreat you always to regard me as your son." The good man willingly expressed his assent. "Let me kiss you, then, in assurance of that affection," continued D'Avannes, "This was done. "If I were not afraid," he said next, "of contravening the law, I would request the same favor of my mother, your wife." The husband desired his wife to kiss him, which she did without testifying either repugnance or alacrity; whilst the fire which the previous conversation had already kindled in the heart of M. d'Avannes grew hotter at this kiss so ardently longed for, and before so peremptorily denied him.

After this M. d'Avannes went back to the king, his brother, and told all sorts of stories about his journey to Montferrat. To his great vexation he learned that his brother was going to Oly and Taffares, and fearing that the journey would be a long one, he resolved to try before his departure if the lady were not better disposed towards him than she appeared. To this end he went to lodge in town, and took, in the street in which she lived, a dilapidated old wooden house, to which he set fire about midnight. The whole town was in great alarm; the rich man was roused by the noise, and calling

out from the window to know where the fire was, he was told that it was at the house of M. d'Avannes. Hurrying thither with all his domestics, he found the young lord in the street in his shirt. Such was his pity for him that, taking him in his arms, and covering him with his own robe, he hastened home with him, and said to his wife, "Here is a prisoner, my dear, whom I commit to your custody. Treat him like myself."

He was no sooner gone than M. d'Avannes, who would have been glad to be treated as her husband, jumped into the bed, hoping that the opportunity and the place would inspire the chaste lady with more humane sentiments; but he was quite disappointed, for as he got in at one side she got out at the other, carrying away her *chamarre*, which she put on; and seating herself at the bedside, she said, "What! monsieur, did you imagine that opportunity could change a virtuous heart? Know that as gold becomes purer in the fire, so a chaste heart grows stronger amid temptations. Often it grows stronger among them than elsewhere, and becomes more cold the more it is attacked by its opposite. Be assured, then, that if I had entertained any other sentiments than those I have avowed, I should not have lacked means, and that I neglect them only because I do not choose to use them. If you would have me continue to love you, banish not only the desire but the thought that, do what you may, you can ever bring me to be other than what I am."

Her women now coming in, she ordered them to prepare a collation of all sorts of confections; but D'Avannes could neither eat nor drink, so great was his vexation at having missed his blow, and exposed himself, as he feared, by that demonstration of his desires, to lose the position of familiarity in which he had been with her. The husband having taken measures for extinguishing the fire, returned, and prevailed on M. d'Avannes to pass the night in his house; but he passed it in such a manner that his eyes were more occupied in weeping than in sleeping. He went and bade them adieu at the bedside very early in the morning, and plainly perceived, in kissing the lady, that she felt more pity than anger for his fault. This was a fresh brand to the fire of his love. After dinner he set out for Taffares with the king; but before his departure

he went twice more to take a final farewell of his good father and his wife, who, since her husband's first command, no longer made any scruple to kiss M. d'Avannes as her son.

There is no doubt that the more virtue did violence to the poor lady's eyes and countenance, constraining them to hide the fire that was in her heart, the more it augmented and became insupportable. Unable, then, any longer to endure the conflict between love and honor, which yet she had resolved should never be manifested, and having no longer the pleasure and consolation of seeing and conversing with him for whom she lived, she fell into a continuous fever, caused by a melancholy humor which she was forced to conceal, and which rendered the extremities of her body quite cold, though the inside burned continually. The physicians, a class of men on whose hands hangs not the health of men, began to despair on account of an obstruction of the spleen, which rendered her melancholy, and they advised the husband to warn his wife to think of her conscience, saying that she was in the hands of God; as if people in good health were not there also. The husband, who was excessively fond of his wife, was so overwhelmed at this news, that he wrote, for his own consolation, to M. d'Avannes, begging he would take the trouble to come and see them, in the hope that his presence would be a comfort to the patient. M. d'Avannes, on receipt of the letter, instantly started off post-haste, and on entering the house, he found the domestics of both sexes as full of grief for their mistress as she deserved. Shocked at what he saw, he remained at the door as if paralyzed, until his good father came and embraced him with tears, and without being able to utter a word, led him to the sick woman's chamber. Turning her languid eyes full upon him, she held out her hand, and drew him towards her with all the little strength left her.

"The moment is come, my lord," she said, embracing him, "when all dissimulation must cease, and I must declare to you the truth I have had so much difficulty in concealing; it is, that if you have had much love for me, I have had no less for you. But my pain is greater than yours, because I have been compelled to hide it. Conscience and honor have never allowed me to declare to you the sentiments of my heart, for fear of augmenting in you a passion which I wished

to diminish. But know, my lord, that the *no* which I have said to you so often, and which it has cost me so much pain to pronounce, is the cause of my death. I die with satisfaction, since, by God's grace, notwithstanding the excess of my love, I have nothing to reproach myself with in regard to piety and honor. I say the excess of my love, for a less fire than mine has destroyed greater and stronger edifices. I die happy, since before quitting this world, I can declare my affection, which corresponds to yours, save only that the honor of men and that of women are not the same thing. I pray you, my lord, henceforth not to be afraid to address yourself to the greatest and most virtuous ladies you can; for it is hearts of that character which have the strongest passions, and which control them most wisely; and your grace, good looks, and good breeding will always enable you to gather the fruits of your love. I will not ask you to pray to God for me, for I know that the gate of Paradise is not shut against true lovers, and that love is a fire which punishes lovers so well in this life, that they are exempted from the sharp torment of Purgatory. And now farewell, my lord; I commend to you your good father, my husband. Tell him truly, I beg you, what you know of me, in order that he may know how much I have loved God and him. And come no more before my eyes, for henceforth I wish to employ my mind only in putting myself in a condition to receive the promises made to me by God before the foundation of the world."

So saying, she embraced him with all the strength of her weak arms. M. d'Avannes, on whom compassion produced the same effect as pain and sickness in the lady, retired without being able to say a word, and threw himself upon a bed which was in the room, where he fainted several times. The lady then called her husband, and after many becoming demonstrations, she recommended M. d'Avannes to him, assuring him that next to himself that was the person she had loved best in the world. Having kissed her husband she bade him farewell, and then the holy sacrament of the altar was brought her after extreme unction, which she received with joy, and an entire assurance of her salvation. Finding at last that her sight was leaving her, and that her strength was failing, she began to repeat aloud her *In manus*, hearing which M.

d'Avannes sat up in the bed, and saw her render up with a gentle sigh her glorious soul to Him from whom it came. When he saw that she was dead, he threw himself upon the body, which he had never approached without trembling while she lived, and embraced it so, that it was with difficulty he was forced away from it. The husband, who had never supposed he loved her so much, was surprised, and said, "It is too much, my lord." And thereupon they withdrew.

After they had long deplored, the one his wife, the other his mistress, M. d'Avannes recounted his love to the husband, and told him that until her death the deceased had never shown him any other signs than those of rigid reserve. This increased the husband's admiration for his departed wife, and still more his grief for her loss, and all his life afterwards he rendered service to M. d'Avannes. The latter, who was then but eighteen, returned to the court, and it was a long time before he would speak to any of the ladies there, or even see them; and for more than two years he wore mourning.

You see, ladies, what a difference there is between a chaste woman and a wanton. Their love, too, produced very different effects; for the one died a glorious death, and the other lived but too long after the loss of her reputation and her honor. As much as the death of the saint is precious before God, so is that of the sinner the reverse.

"Truly, Saffredent," said Oisille, "anything finer than the story you have just narrated one could not wish to hear; and if the rest of the company knew the persons as I do, they would think it still finer, for I never saw a handsomer gentleman, or one of better deportment, than M. d'Avannes."

"Must it not be owned," replied Saffredent, "that this was a chaste and good woman, since, in order to appear more virtuous than she was in reality, and to hide the love which reason and nature willed that she should have for so perfect a gentleman, she let herself die for want of giving herself the pleasure she desired without owning it."

"If she had felt that desire," said Parlamente, "she would not have lacked either place or opportunity to reveal it; but she had so much virtue that reason always controlled her desire."

"You may paint her portrait as you please," said Hircan ; "but I know that a greater devil always drives out a less, and that the pride of the ladies seeks rather carnal pleasure than the fear and love of God. They are perpetual enigmas, and they are such clever dissemblers, that it is impossible to know what is in their hearts. If the world had not annexed infamy to the loss of their honour, it would be universally found that nature has made them with the same inclinations and the same affections as ourselves. Not daring to take the pleasure they long for, they have changed that vice into another which they think more decorous, I mean a cruelty quite as much pretended as real, by which they think to gain immortal renown ; and through the petty vanity of resisting the vice of nature's law (if nature is vicious), they resemble not only the brutes in cruelty and inhumanity, but even the devils, whose pride and craft they borrow."

"It is a pity you have a good woman for your wife," said Nomerfide, "since, not a content with despising the virtue of other women, you would fain have it believed that they are all vicious."

"I am very glad," replied Hircan, "to have a wife who gives no ground for scandal ; a thing which I would not do either ; but as for chastity of heart, I believe that she and I are children of Adam and Eve : so, if we examine ourselves well, we have no business to cover our nakedness with leaves, but rather to confess our weakness."

"I know well," said Parlamente, "that we all have need of the grace of God, being as we are by nature disposed to sin ; but it must be owned, nevertheless, that our temptations are not similar to yours : and if we sin through pride, no one suffers for it, and neither our body nor our hands receive any stain. But your pleasure consists in dishonoring women, and your glory in killing men in war ; which are two things absolutely opposed to the law of God."

"I admit what you say," remarked Geburon ; "but when God says that *whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery in his heart*, and that *whoever hateth his neighbor is a homicide*, do you suppose he does not also mean to speak of women ?"

"God, who knoweth the heart, will decide," said Longarine.

"Meanwhile, it is always a good thing that men should have no power to accuse us, for God's goodness is so great that He will not judge us without an accuser. Not judge us, did I say? The frailty of our hearts is so well known to Him, that He will give us credit for not having proceeded to overt acts."

"Pray let us drop this dispute," said Saffredent. "We are here to tell tales, not to preach sermons. I therefore give my voice to Ennasuite, and beg that she will not forget to make us laugh."

"I shall not fail to do so," replied Ennasuite. "On my way hither I was told a story of two servants of a princess, which seemed to me so droll, and made me laugh so much, that I forgot the dismal tale I had prepared for to-day, and which I will postpone until to-morrow, my countenance being now too merry to make it pass well with you."

NOVEL XXVII.

A Secretary had the imprudence to solicit the favors of his host's wife, and had only the shame for his pains.

THERE was at Amboise a man who served a princess in the capacity of chamberlain, and who, being an obliging, civil person, gladly entertained people who came to him, especially his own comrades. Not long ago, one of his mistress's secretaries came to lodge with him, and remained ten or twelve days. This secretary was so ugly, that he was more like a king of the cannibals than a Christian. Though his host treated him as a friend and a brother, yet he behaved to him like a man who had—I will not say forgotten all decency, but who had never had a feeling of it in his heart: this was, to solicit in the way of lawless love his companion's wife, who not only had nothing engaging in her, but looked the very antidote of criminal pleasure, and as good and virtuous a woman as any in Amboise. On becoming aware of the man's bad intentions, the woman thought it better to expose his turpitude than to suppress and conceal it by a prompt and decisive refusal; she therefore pretended to listen to his suit. He, thinking that he had made a conquest, pressed her incessantly, without considering that

she was fifty, that she was not handsome, and that she had the reputation of a good woman who loved her husband. One day among others, when the husband was at home, and they were in a lower room, she pretended that the only thing requisite was to find a safe place for a tête-à-tête, where they might entertain each other as he wished. He proposed that they should go up to the garret. She rose at once, and begged him to go first, promising to follow him. He, laughing and grinning like an amorous monkey, went up-stairs and posted himself in the garret. Whilst he was waiting for what he had so hotly desired, he listened with all his ears for his fair one's footsteps; but, instead of them, he heard her voice crying out, "Wait a bit, master secretary, till I go and ask my husband if it is his pleasure that I should go to you." Imagine how the man looked in tears who had cut such an ugly figure when laughing. He hurried down-stairs with tears in his eyes, and begged her for God's sake to say nothing, and not set her husband against him. "I am certain," she replied, "that you are too much his friend to wish to say anything which might not be repeated to him; so I am going to speak to him about this matter." And so she did, in spite of all he could do to prevent her. He ran away, and was as much ashamed as the husband was glad to hear of the trick his wife had played him. So satisfied was the good man with his wife's virtue, that he gave himself no concern about his companion's villainy, thinking him sufficiently punished in having the shame he had intended for him recoil upon his own head.

This tale teaches us, ladies, that honest folk ought never to attach themselves to those who have neither conscience, heart, nor wit enough to know God, honor, and true love.

"Though your tale be short," said Oisille, "it is as amusing as any I have heard, and to the honor of a worthy woman."

"It is no great thing to boast of," said Simontault, "for an honest woman to refuse a man so ugly as you represent this secretary to have been. Had he been handsome and well-bred, her conduct would then have been some evidence of virtue. As I think I know the man, if it was my turn to tell a story, I think I could give you one about him not less droll than this."

"Well, do so," said Ennasuite.

"Courtiers, and inhabitants of great cities," he continued, "have such a good opinion of their own capacity, that they regard others as very small folk in comparison with themselves. Though craft and cunning are of all countries and all conditions, yet as those who think themselves the shrewdest do so only through vanity, they are only the more laughed at when they happen to make some mistake, as I shall instance to you in an affair of recent occurrence."

NOVEL XXVIII.

A Secretary, thinking to dupe a certain person, was himself duped.

WHEN King Francis I. was at Paris with his sister the Queen of Navarre, that princess had a secretary named Jean, who was not one of those who let anything worth having be lost for want of picking it up. There was neither president nor counsellor with whom he was not acquainted, merchant nor rich man whose house he did not frequent. At the same time there also arrived in Paris a merchant of Bayonne, named Bernard du Ha, who, having business in hand, and being in need of protection, addressed himself to the *lieutenant criminel*, who was of his country. The Queen of Navarre's secretary used also to go frequently to see the same person, as a good servant of his master and mistress. One holiday, when he went to the house, he found neither the lieutenant nor his lady at home; but there was Bernard du Ha, playing a viol or some other instrument for the servant-women of the house, and teaching them to dance the branles of Gascony. When the secretary saw this, he wanted to make Bernard believe that he was doing wrong, and that if the lieutenant and his lady knew of it they would be very angry. Having talked to him in so alarming a manner that the other begged him not to tell what he had seen, he said, "What will you give me not to say a word about it?" Bernard du Ha, who was not so frightened as he made believe, perceiving that the secretary wanted to dupe him,

promised to give him a pasty of the best Basque ham he had ever eaten. The secretary was highly pleased, and begged that he might have the pasty on the following Sunday after dinner, which the other promised.

Counting on this promise, the secretary went to see a lady of Paris whom he passionately desired to marry, and said to her, "On Sunday, madam, I will come and sup with you, if you please ; but do not trouble yourself about anything but good bread and good wine, for I have so gulled a stupid fellow of Bayonne, that he will be at the cost of the rest : I will bring you the best Basque ham that ever was tasted in Paris." The lady, taking his word for it, invited two or three of her fair neighbors, and assured them she would treat them to something they had never tasted before. Sunday being come, the secretary went in quest of the merchant, and found him at the Pont au Change. Saluting him very politely, he said, "To the devil with you for having given me such trouble to find you."

"Many a one has taken more trouble than you," replied Bernard du Ha, "and has not been so well rewarded in the end." So saying, he produced the pasty, which he had under his cloak, and which was big enough to set before a small army. The secretary was so pleased, that although he had an enormous ugly mouth, he squeezed it up so small that one would have thought he could not bite the ham. Hastily clutching the pasty, he turned his back upon the merchant without inviting him to partake of the treat, and carried it to his mistress, who was very curious to know if the eatables of Guienne were as good as those of Paris. Supper-time being come, the company began to fall to at the soup with much vigor. "Leave those insipid things," said the secretary, "and let us taste this whet for wine." So saying, he opened the pasty, and set about cutting the ham, but it was so hard that he could not stick the knife into it. After trying again and again, he found that he was hoaxed, and that instead of a ham he had been given a wooden shoe, such as is worn in Gascony, with a stick thrust into the end of it, and the whole smeared with suet and powdered with rust of iron and spices, which gave out a very pleasant odor. The secretary was greatly ashamed, both of having been duped by the person he thought to dupe, and having deluded his mistress, contrary to his intentions ; to say

nothing of his sore disappointment at having to content himself with soup for supper. The ladies, who were as vexed as himself, would have accused him as the author of the trick if they had not seen by his face that he was anything but pleased with its success.

After making a light supper, the secretary retired in great dudgeon and seeing that Bernard du Ha had not kept his word, he did not think himself bound by his own. Accordingly, he went to the *lieutenant criminel*, intending to say everything bad he could of the merchant; but the latter had been beforehand with him, and had already related the adventure to the lieutenant, who laughed in the secretary's face, and told him that he had learned to his cost what it was to play tricks on Gascons. And so all he got was the shame of having been the dupe of his own cunning.

The same thing happens to many, who, wishing to deceive, find themselves deceived. Therefore it is best to do to others only as we would be done by.

"I assure you," said Geburon, "that I have often witnessed such occurrences; and those who pass for village boobies often overreach persons who think themselves very clever; for there is no greater ninny than a man who thinks himself cunning, nor any one wiser than he who knows that he is not so."

"He who knows his own incapacity, knows something, after all," said Parlamente.

"For fear time should fail us, I give my voice to Nomerfide," said Simontault. "I am sure she will not delay us long by her rhetoric."

"You shall have from me the satisfaction you desire," said Nomerfide. "I am not surprised, ladies, if love inspires princes and well-educated persons with the art of extricating themselves from danger. In fact, they are brought up in intercourse with so many persons of knowledge, that it would be very surprising if they were ignorant of anything. But address in love appears with much greater luster when those who display it are persons of less intelligence. I shall, then, relate to you a piece of cleverness exhibited by a priest through the prompting of love alone; for he was so ignorant in all other things, that he could hardly say mass."

NOVEL XXIX.

A villager, whose wife intrigued with the parish priest, suffered himself to be easily deceived.

THERE was at Carrelles, a village in the county of Maine, a rich husbandman, who in his old age married a handsome young wife, by whom he had no children ; but she consoled herself for this disappointment with several friends. When gentlemen and persons of mark failed her, she reverted to her last resource, which was the church, and chose for the accomplice of her sin him who could absolve her—that is to say, her priest, who paid frequent visits to his sheep. The dull old husband suspected nothing ; but as he was a rough and sturdy old fellow, she played her game as secretly as she could, being afraid that her husband would kill her if he came to know of it.

One day, when the husband was gone into the fields, and his wife did not expect him back for some time, she sent for master parson to confess her ; but during the time they were making good cheer together, the husband arrived so suddenly, that the priest had not time to steal off. Intending then to hide, he went by the wife's directions up into a loft, and covered the trap-hole in the floor by which he had got in with a winnowing basket. Meanwhile the wife, who was afraid her husband might suspect something, regaled him well at dinner, and plied him so well with wine, that the good man, having taken a little drop too much, and being fatigued with walking, fell asleep in a chair by the fireside. The priest, who found it dull work waiting in the loft, on ceasing to hear any noise in the room below, leaned over the trap-hole, and stretching out his neck as far as he could, saw that the good man was asleep. But while making his observations he inadvertently leaned with so much weight on the winnowing basket, that down fell basket, priest and all, by the side of the good man, and woke him up with the noise. But the priest was on his legs before the other had opened his eyes, and said, " There's your winnowing basket, gossip, and I'm much obliged to you : " and so saying, he walked off. The poor husbandman, quite bewildered, asked his wife what was the matter ? " It is your winnowing

basket, my dear," she replied, " which the priest had borrowed and has now returned."

" It is a very clumsy way of returning what one has borrowed," said the good man, grumbling, " for I thought the house was falling."

In this way the priest saved himself at the expense of the husbandman, who objected to nothing but the abrupt manner in which his reverence had returned his winnowing basket. The master he served, ladies, saved him for that time, in order to possess and torment him longer.

" Do not imagine that simple folk are more exempt from craft than we are," said Geburon ; " far from it, they have a great deal more. Look at thieves, murderers, sorcerers, false coiners, and other people of that sort, whose wits are always at work ; they are all simple folk."

" I am not surprised that they have more craft than others," said Parlamente," but I am surprised that, having their wits directed to so many other things, they can think of love. Is it not strange that so fine a passion can enter such vulgar hearts? "

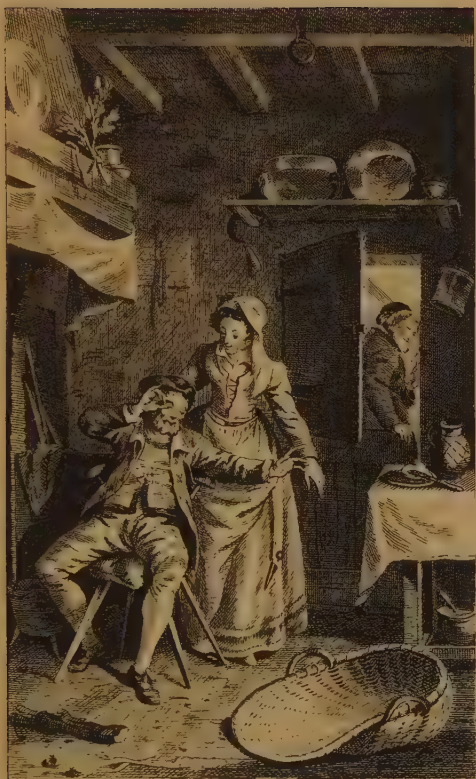
" You know, madam, what Maître Jean de Meun says :

*Aussi bien sont amourettes
Sous bureau que sous brunettes.*

Besides, the love of which the tale speaks is not that which makes one wear harness. The poor, who have not wealth and honors like us, have in compensation more of the commodities of nature. Their viands are not so delicate as ours, but good appetite makes amends for that deficiency, and they fare better on coarse bread than we on dainties. Their beds are not so handsome or so well made as ours, but their sleep is sounder. Their ladies are neither painted nor decked out like ours whom we idolize, but they receive pleasure from them much oftener than we, without fearing any other tongues than those of the beasts and birds that see them. In a word, they lack what we have, and have abundance of what we have not."

" Pray let us have done with this peasant and his wife," said Nomerfide, " and finish the day before vespers. It is for Hircan to do so."

" I will finish it, then, with a very dismal tale," said Hir-



can. "Though I do not willingly speak ill of ladies, knowing as I do that men are malicious enough to deduce from the fault of one conclusions disparaging to all the rest, yet the singularity of the adventure overcomes my fear, and the exposure of ignorance will perhaps make others wiser."

NOVEL XXX.

Notable example of human frailty in a lady who, to conceal an evil, commits a still greater one.

IN the time of Louis XII., the legate at Avignon being then a lord of the house of Amboise, nephew to the Legate of France, whose name was George, there was a lady in Languedoc who had an income of more than four thousand ducats. Her name I will not mention, for sake of her relations. She was still very young when her husband died, leaving her but one son; and whether from regret for her husband, or love of her son, she resolved never to marry again. To avoid all occasion for doing so, she frequented only the society of the devout, thinking that opportunity makes sin, and not knowing that sin forges opportunity. She gave herself up wholly to the divine service, shunning all parties of pleasure and everything worldly, insomuch that she made it a matter of conscience to be present at a wedding, or to hear the organ played in church. When her son was seven years old, she chose a man of holy life as his preceptor, to bring him up in piety and sanctity. But when he was between fourteen and fifteen, nature, who is a very mysterious schoolmaster, finding him well grown and idle, taught him a very different lesson from any he had learned from his preceptor; for under that new instruction he began to look upon and desire such things as seemed to him fair, and among others a demoiselle who slept in his mother's room. No one had the least suspicion of this, for he was regarded as a child, and nothing was ever heard in the house but goodly discourse.

The young gallant having begun secretly to solicit this girl,

she went and told her mistress. The mother loved her son so much, that she believed this to be a story told to get him into disgrace; but the girl repeated her complaints so often, that her mistress at last said she would find out the truth of the matter: if it was as the girl stated, she would punish her son severely, but if not, the accuser should pay the penalty. In order, then, to come at the truth, she ordered the demoiselle to make an appointment with the young gentleman that he should come to her at midnight, to the bed in which she lay alone near the door in his mother's chamber. The demoiselle obeyed her orders, and that night the mother lay down in the demoiselle's bed, resolving that if her son came thither she would chastise him in such a manner that he should never lie with a woman without remembering it. Such were her angry thoughts when her son actually entered the bed in which she lay; but unable still to bring herself to believe that he had any unchaste intention, she waited for some plainer evidence of his bad purpose before she would speak to him. But she waited so long, and nature is so frail, that her anger ended in an abominable pleasure, and she forgot that she was a mother. As water retained by force is more impetuous when let loose, so was it with this unfortunate woman, who made her whole pride consist in the violence she did her body. When she began to descend the first step from her chastity she found herself at once at the bottom, and became pregnant that night by him whom she wished to hinder from getting others with child.

No sooner was the sin committed than she was seized with the most poignant remorse, and her repentance lasted as long as her life. So keen was her anguish on rising from beside her son, who never discovered his mistake, that entering a closet, and calling to mind the firm resolution she had formed, and which she had so badly executed, she passed the whole night alone in an agony of tears. But instead of humbling herself, and owning that of ourselves alone, and without the aid of God, we can do nothing but sin, she thought by her own efforts and by her tears to repair the past and prevent future mischief, always imputing her sin to the occasion, and not to wickedness, for which there is no remedy but the grace of God. As if there was but one sort of sin which could bring

damnation, she applied her whole mind to avoid that one; but pride, which the sense of extreme sinfulness should destroy, was too strongly rooted in her heart, and grew in such a manner, that, to avoid one evil, she committed many others.

Early next morning she sent for her son's governor, and said to him, "My son is coming to maturity, and it is time that he should be removed from the house. One of my relations, who is beyond the mountains with the Grand Master of Chaumont, will be glad to have him. Take him away, then, forthwith; and to spare me the pain of parting, do not let him come to bid me farewell." Without more ado she gave him money for the journey, and he set out the next day with his pupil, who was very glad of it; and having had what he wanted of his mistress, desired nothing better than to go to the wars. The lady was long plunged in extreme grief, and but for the fear of God she could have wished that the unhappy fruit of her womb should perish. To conceal her fault she pretended to be ill; and having a bastard brother in whom she confided above all men, and to whom she had made large donations, she sent for him, informed him of the misfortune that had happened to her, but not of her son's share in it, and begged him to save her honor by his help; which he did. Some days before she expected to be confined he advised her to try change of air, and remove to his house, where she would be more likely to recover than at home. She went thither with hardly any attendants, and found there a midwife, who had been sent for as if to attend her brother's wife, and who, without knowing the lying-in-woman, delivered her by night of a fine little girl. The gentleman put the infant out to nurse as his own; and the lady, after a month's stay, returned home, where she lived more austere than ever.

Her son being grown up, and Italy being at peace, he sent to beg his mother's permission to return to her. But as she was afraid of relapsing into the same crime, she put him off from time to time as well as she could; but he pressed her so much, that at last she gave him leave to come home, having no plausible reason to allege for persisting longer in her refusal. She sent him word, however, not to appear before her until he was married; to choose a wife whom he loved passion-

ately ; and not to let his choice be determined by wealth, for if he chose a comely wife that was enough.

During this time the daughter, who had been left with the bastard brother, having grown up into a very handsome girl, her guardian thought of removing her to some place where she should not be known. He consulted the mother on the subject, and it was her wish that she should be given to the Queen of Navarre, named Catherine. The girl was so handsome and well-bred at the age of thirteen, that the Queen of Navarre had a great regard for her, and wished much to marry her well ; but the girl being poor, many lovers presented themselves, but no husband. The unknown father, returning from Italy, visited the court of the Queen of Navarre, and no sooner saw his daughter than he fell in love with her. As he had his mother's permission to marry any woman he liked, he only asked was she of noble lineage, and being told that she was, he demanded her in marriage of the Queen of Navarre, who very gladly bestowed her upon him, knowing well that the cavalier was as wealthy as he was well-bred and handsome.

The marriage having been consummated, the gentleman wrote to his mother, saying she could no longer close her doors against him, since he brought with him a wife as handsome and as perfect as she could wish for. His mother made inquiries as to the wife he had taken, and found that it was their own daughter, which caused her such excessive affliction, that she was near dying suddenly, seeing that the means she employed to put a stop to the course of her misfortune only served to make it greater. Finding no remedy for what had occurred, she went to the Legate of Avignon, confessed the enormity of her crime, and asked his advice. The legate, to satisfy her conscience, summoned several theologians, to whom he submitted the affair, without naming the person concerned. The decision of this council of conscience was, that the lady was never to reveal the secret to her children, who had not sinned, inasmuch as they had known nothing ; but that, as for herself, she was to do penance all her life. So the poor lady returned home, where soon after arrived her son and her daughter-in-law, who loved each other so much, that never was there a fonder couple, or one more like each other, she being his daughter, sister, and wife ; and he her father, brother,

and husband. Their love continued unabated to the last, whilst their profoundly penitent mother never saw them caress but she withdrew to weep.*

* This novel is founded on a popular tradition, traces of which are found in several places in France. Millin, in his *Antiquités Nationales*, speaking of the collegial church of Ecouis, says: "There was found in the middle of the nave, in the cross aisle, a white marble slab, on which was inscribed this epitaph:

‘Ci-gît l’enfant, ci-gît le père,
Ci-gît la sœur, ci-gît le frère,
Ci-gît la femme et le mari,
Et ne sont que deux corps ici.’”

[Here lies the child, here lies the father, here lies the sister, here lies the brother, here lie the wife and the husband, and there are but two bodies here.]

"The tradition is, that a son of Madame d'Ecouis had by his mother, without knowing her or being recognized by her, a daughter named Cécile. He afterwards married in Lorraine that same Cécile, she being then with the Duchess of Bar. Thus Cécile was her husband's daughter and sister. They were interred in the same grave at Ecouis, in 1512." Millin says that the same story is told (but with modifications) in other churches of France; for instance, in that of Alincourt, a village between Amiens and Abbeville, is seen the following epitaph:

“Ci-gît le fils, ci-gît la mère,
Ci-gît la fille avec le père,
Ci-gît la sœur, ci-gît le frère,
Ci-gît la femme et le mari,
Et ne sont que trois corps ici.”

[Here lies the son, here lies the mother, here lies the daughter with the father, here lies the sister, here lies the brother, here lie the wife and the husband, and there are only three bodies here.]

Gaspard Meturas, who has inserted this epitaph in his *Hortus Epitaphiorum Selectorum*, 1648, says that it is found in a church of Clermont, in Auvergne, and adds: "The key to it consists in saying that the mother engendered her husband by lying with (*en épousant*) her own father; for it thence follows that he was her son, her brother, and her husband, even legitimately, the marriage having been effected with a righteous ignorance on both sides.

Dunlop, in his *History of Fiction*, says that the thirty-fifth novel of the second part of *Bandello* "is the same story with the plot of the Mysterious Mother of Horace Walpole, and the thirtieth tale of the Queen of Navarre. The first part of this story had already been told in the twenty-third novel of Massuccio. The second part, which relates to the marriage only, occurs in *Bandello* and the Queen of Navarre. It is not likely, however, that the French or Italian novelists borrowed from one another. The tales of *Bandello* were first published in 1554, and as the Queen of Navarre died in 1549, it is improbable that she had an opportunity of seeing them. On the other hand, the work

"There, ladies, is what happens to those of your sex who think to vanquish, by their own strength, love and nature with all the faculties which God has given them. Better were it to own their weakness, avoid exposure to temptation, and say to God, like David, "Lord I suffer force: answer for me."

"It is impossible to imagine a stranger case," said Oisille. "Methinks there is no man or woman who ought not to humble himself and fear God, seeing how the hope of doing a good thing was so productive of mischief."

"Be assured," said Parlamente, "that the first step man takes in self-confidence, removes him so far from the confidence he ought to have in God."

"Man is wise," said Geburon, "when he recognizes no greater enemy than himself, and distrusts his own will and counsel, however good and holy they may seem in his eyes."

"For no apparent prospect of good to come of it, however great," said Longarine, "should a woman expose herself to share the same bed with a man, however nearly related to her. Fire and tow are no safe neighbors."

"Assuredly," said Ennasuite, "this woman was a conceited fool, who thought herself such a saint that she could not sin,

of the queen was not printed till 1558, nine years after her death, so it is not likely that any part of it was copied by Bandello, whose tales had been edited some years before. It may therefore be presumed that some current traditions furnished both with the horrible incident they report. Indeed Bandello declares, in the introduction to the tale, that it happened in Navarre, and was told to him by a lady of that country. In Luther's *Colloquia Mensalia*, under the article *Auricular Confession*, it is said to have occurred at Erfurt, in Germany. It is also related in the eleventh volume of *Byshop's Blossoms*, and in *L'Inceste Innocent*, a novel by Desfontaines, published in 1638. Julio de Medrano, an old Spanish writer of the sixteenth century, says that he heard a similar story when he was in the Bourbonnais, where the inhabitants showed him the house in which the parties had lived, and repeated to him this epitaph, which was inscribed on their tomb" (that in four lines quoted above). "Mr. Walpole disclaims having had any knowledge of the tale of the Queen of Navarre or Bandello when he wrote his drama. Its plot, he says, was suggested by a story he had heard when very young, of a lady who, under uncommon agonies of mind, waited on Archbishop Tillotson, revealed her crime, and besought his counsel in what manner she should act, as the fruit of her horrible artifice had lately been married to her son, neither party being aware of the relation that subsisted between them. The prelate charged her never to let her son or daughter know what had passed. For herself, he bade her almost despair."

as some would have simple folks believe of them, which is a gross and pernicious error."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Oisille, "that there are people so foolish as to believe anything of the sort?"

"They do still more," said Longarine; "they say that it is necessary to habituate oneself to chastity; and to try their strength, they talk with the handsomest women and those they love best, and by kissing and touching them make trial of themselves as to whether or not they are in a condition of complete mortification of the flesh. When they find that this pleasure moves them, they fall back on solitude, fasting, and discipline; and when they have so subdued the flesh that neither conversation nor kissing causes them any emotion, the fools try the temptation of lying together and embracing without any voluptuous desire. But, for one who resists, a thousand succumb. Thence have ensued so many mischiefs, that the Archbishop of Milan, where this religious practice was introduced, was compelled to separate the sexes, and put the women into the women's convent, and the men into that of the men."

"Was there ever a more extravagant folly?" said Geburon. "A man wants to make himself sinless, and seeks with avidity provocations to sin."

"Some there are," said Saffredent, "who do quite the reverse; they shun temptation as much as possible, and yet concupiscence clings to them everywhere. The good Saint Jerome, after having soundly flogged and hid himself in the desert, confessed that he had been unable to overcome the fire of lust that burned in his marrow. The sovereign remedy, then, is to commend oneself to God; for, unless He upholds us by His power, His virtue, and His goodness, we not only fall, but take pleasure in falling."

"You do not see what I do," said Hircan; "which is, that whilst we were telling our stories the monks who were behind that hedge did not hear the vesper-bell; but no sooner did they hear us talk of God than away they went, and now they are ringing the second bell."

"We shall do well to follow them," said Oisille, "and praise God for his grace in enabling us to pass this day so happily."

Upon this the whole company rose and went to the church, where they devoutly heard vespers. At supper they talked over the conversation of the day, and many things which had occurred in the time, each citing what he thought most worthy of recollection. After a cheerful evening, they retired to their beds, in the hope of resuming next day a pastime which was so agreeable to them. Thus ended the third day.

FOURTH DAY.

MADAME OISILLE rose earlier than the rest, according to her good custom, and meditated on Holy Writ whilst awaiting the gradual assemblage of the company. The laziest excused themselves with the words of Scripture, "I have a wife and I cannot come so soon." Thus it was, that when Hircan and his wife made their appearance, Madame Oisille had already begun her reading; but she knew how to pick out the passages in which those are censured who neglect the hearing of the Word. She not only read the text, but she made them such good and holy exhortations, that it was impossible for them to take offence at them. When these devotional exercises were ended, Parlamente said to her, "I was vexed when I came in at having been lazy, but I now congratulate myself on my laziness, since it has made you speak so well. I derive a double advantage from it—repose of body, and satisfaction of mind."

"For penance, then, let us go to mass," said Oisille, "to pray to our Lord for the will and the strength to do His commands; and then let Him command what he pleases."

As she said these words they entered the church, and after having heard mass with much devotion, they sat down to table, where Hircan did not fail to banter his wife for her laziness. After dinner every one retired to study his part, and at the appointed hour they all repaired punctually to the usual rendezvous. Oisille asked Hircan who should begin the day. "If my wife had not been the first speaker yesterday," he said,

FOURTH DAY.

*On the Fourth Day are chiefly told Tales of the
virtuous patience and long suffering of
Ladies to win over their husbands;
and of the prudence that Men
have used towards Women
to save the honour of
their families and
lineage.*

"I would give my voice for her ; for though I have always believed that she loved me better than any man in the world, she has shown me to-day that she loves me a great deal better than God and his Word, since she has preferred my company to your reading. Since, then, I cannot give my voice to the most discreet of the women, I will give it to the most discreet of the men—I mean Geburon, whom I entreat not to spare the monks."

"It is not necessary to make the entreaty," replied Geburon. "I hold them too well in mind to forget them. It is not long since I heard a story told by Monsieur de Saint Vincent, then the emperor's ambassador, which is too good to be lost."

NOVEL XXXI.

A Monastery of Cordeliers was burned and the monks in it, in perpetual memory of the cruelty of one of them who was in love with a lady.

THERE was in the dominions of the Emperor Maximilian of Austria a monastery of Cordeliers, held in high esteem, near which was the house of a gentleman. He was so infatuated with these Cordeliers that there was nothing he did not give them, in order to have part in the benefit of their fastings and prayers. Among others, there was in this monastery a tall, handsome young Cordelier, whom the gentleman had taken for his confessor, and who was as absolute in the house as the master himself. The Cordelier, struck by the exceeding beauty and propriety of the gentleman's wife, became so enamored of her, that he could neither eat nor drink, and lost all natural reason. Resolved to execute his design, he went all alone one day to the gentleman's house. Finding no one at home, the monk asked the lady whither her husband was gone? She replied that he was gone to one of his estates, where he was to remain two or three days ; but that if he wanted him she would send an express to bring him back. The Cordelier told her that was not necessary, and began to go to and fro about the house, as if he had some affair of consequence in his head.

As soon as the monk had left the lady's room, she said to one of her women (there were but two of them), "Run after the father, and learn what he wants; for I know by his looks that he is not pleased." The girl, finding him in the courtyard, asked him if he wanted anything? He said he did, and drawing her into a corner, he plunged into her bosom a poniard he carried in his sleeve. He had hardly done the deed when one of the gentleman's men, who had gone to receive the rent of a farm, entered the yard on horseback. As soon as he had dismounted, he saluted the Cordelier, who embraced him, and buried the poniard in his back, after which he closed the gates of the château.

The lady, seeing that her servant did not return, and surprised at her remaining so long with the Cordelier, said to the other woman, "Go see why your companion does not come back." The servant went, and no sooner came in sight of the Cordelier than he called her aside, and served her as he had done the other. Knowing that he was then alone in the house, he went to the lady, and told her that he had long loved her, and that it was time she should obey him. She, who could never have suspected him of anything of the kind, replied, "I believe, father, that if I were so unhappily inclined, you would be the first to condemn me and cast a stone at me."

"Come out into the yard," said the monk, "and you will see what I have done."

The poor woman did so, and seeing her two women and her man lying dead on the ground, was so horrified, that she remained motionless and speechless as a statue. The villain, who did not want to have her for an hour only, did not think fit to offer her violence then, and said to her, "Have no fear, mademoiselle; you are in the hands of that man in all the world who loves you most." So saying, he took off his robe, beneath which he had a smaller one, which he presented to the demoiselle, threatening, if she did not put it on, that he would treat her as he had done the others. The demoiselle, more dead than alive, made a show of obeying him, as well to save her life as to gain time, in hopes that her husband would return. She took off her head-dress by the Cordelier's order as slowly as she could; and when she had done so, the monk,

without regard to the beauty of her hair, cut it off in haste, made her strip to her shift and put on the small robe, and then, resuming his own, set off with all the speed he could make along with the little Cordelier he had so long coveted.

God, who has pity on the wronged innocent, was touched by the tears of this poor lady, and so ordered things that her husband, having despatched his business sooner than he expected, took that very road to return home by which the Cordelier was carrying off his wife. The monk, descrying the husband from a distance, said to the lady, "Here comes your husband. I know that if you look at him he will try to get you out of my hands; so walk before me, and do not turn your head in his direction, for if you make him the least sign, I shall have plunged my poniard in your breast sooner than he will have delivered you." Presently the gentleman came up, and asked him whence he came? "From your house, monsieur," replied the Cordelier. "I left mademoiselle quite well and she is expecting you." The gentleman rode on without perceiving his wife; but the valet who accompanied him, and who had always been in the habit of conversing with the Cordelier's companion, named Friar John, called to his mistress, thinking that she was that person. The poor woman, who durst not turn her head towards her husband, made no reply to the valet; and the latter crossed the road, that he might see the face of this pretended Brother John. The poor lady, without saying anything, made a sign to him with her eyes, which were full of tears. The valet then rode up to his master, and said, "In conscience, monsieur, Friar John is very like mademoiselle your wife. I had a look at him as I crossed the road. It is certainly not the usual Friar John; at least, I can tell you, that if it is, he weeps abundantly, and that he gave me a very sorrowful glance of his eye."

The gentleman told him he was dreaming, and made light of what he said. The valet, however, still persisting in it that there was something wrong, asked leave to ride back and see to it, and begged his master to wait for him. The gentleman let him go, and waited to see what would be the upshot. But the Cordelier, hearing the valet coming after him with shouts to Friar John, and making no doubt that the lady had been recognized, turned upon the valet with a great iron-bound

staff, gave him such a blow on the side that he knocked him off his horse, and springing instantly upon him with the poniard, speedily despatched him. The gentleman, who from a distance had seen his valet fall, and supposed that this had happened by some accident, spurred towards him at once to help him. As soon as he was within reach, the Cordelier struck him a blow of the same staff with which he had struck the valet, unhorsed and fell upon him; but the gentleman, being very strong, threw his arms round the Cordelier, and hugged him so roughly, that he not only prevented his doing him any more mischief, but made him drop the poniard. The wife caught it up at once and gave it to her husband. At the same time she seized him by his hood and held him with all her might, whilst her husband stabbed him several times with the poniard. The Cordelier, being unable to do anything else, begged for quarter, and confessed the crime he had committed. The gentleman granted him his life, and begged his wife to go for his people, and a cart to carry the prisoner away, which she did, throwing off her Cordelier's robe, and hurrying home in her shift and her cropped hair. The gentleman's retainers all hastened to help him to bring home the wolf he had captured; and the culprit was afterwards sent by the gentleman to Flanders to be tried by the emperor's officers.

He not only confessed the crime for which he was tried, but also avowed a fact, which was afterwards verified on the spot by special commissioners sent for that purpose, which was, that several other ladies and handsome girls had been taken to that convent in the same manner as this Cordelier had attempted to carry off the lady of whom we are speaking; and if he did not succeed, this was owing to nothing else than the goodness of God, who always takes upon Him the defence of those who trust in Him. The girls and the other stolen spoil found in the monastery were removed, and the monks were burned with the monastery, in perpetual memorial of a crime so horrible. We see from this that there is nothing more cruel than love when its principle is vice, as there is nothing more humane or more laudable when it dwells in a virtuous heart.*

* Notwithstanding what is said in the prologue to the fourth day respecting the recent origin of this tale, it is found in several writers of

I am very sorry, ladies, that truth does not furnish us with so many tales to the advantage of the Cordeliers as contrariwise. I like this order, and should be very glad to know some story in which I could praise them. But we are so pledged to speak the truth, that I cannot conceal it after the report of persons so worthy of belief; though, at the same time, I assure you that if the Cordeliers of the present day did anything worthy of memory which was to their honor, I would do justice to it with more alacrity than I have told the truth in the story I have just related to you.

"In good faith, Geburon," said Oisille, "that sort of love might well be called cruelty."

"I am surprised," said Simontault, "that he did not ravish the lady at once when he saw her in her shift, and in a place where he was master."

"He was not picksome but gluttonous," said Saffredent. "As he intended to have his fill of her every day, he had no mind to amuse himself with nibbling at her."

"That is not it," said Parlamente. "A ruffian is always timorous. The fear of being surprised and losing his prey made him carry off his lamb, as the wolf carries off a sheep, to devour it at his ease."

"I cannot believe he loved her," said Dagoucin, "nor can I conceive that so exalted a passion as love should enter so cowardly and villainous a heart."

"Be it as it may," said Oisille, "he was well punished for it. I pray God that all who do the like deeds may suffer the like penalties. But to whom do you give your voice?"

"To you, madam," said Geburon, "for I know you will not fail to tell us a good tale."

"If new things are good," replied Oisille, "I will tell you one which cannot be bad, since the event happened in my time, and I have it from an eye-witness. You are, doubtless, not ignorant that death being the end of all our woes, it may,

earlier date. It is identical, for instance, with a fabliau by Rutebeuf, entitled *Frère Denise* (See *Fabliaux de Legrand d'Aussy*), iv. 383, and has some resemblance to No. LX. of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*. The Queen of Navarre's tale has been copied by Henry Stephens, in his *Apology for Herodotus*, by L'Etoile, in his journal of the reign of Henri III., anno 1577, and by Malespini, in his *Ducento Novelle*, No. LXXV.

consequently, be called the beginning of our felicity and our repose. Thus man's greatest misery is to wish for death and not be able to obtain it. The greatest ill which can befall a criminal is not to be put to death, but to be made to suffer so much that he longs for death, while his sufferings, though continual, are of such a nature as not to be capable of abridging his life. It was in this way that a gentleman treated his wife, as you shall hear."

NOVEL XXXII.

A husband surprises his wife in *flagrante delicto*, and subjects her to a punishment more terrible than death itself.

KING CHARLES VIII. sent to Germany a gentleman named Bernage, Lord of Sivray, near Amboise. This gentleman, traveling day and night, arrived very late one evening at the house of a gentleman, where he asked for a night's lodging, and obtained it, but with difficulty. The owner of the house, nevertheless, learning in whose service he was, came to him and begged he would excuse the incivility of his servants, stating that certain of his wife's relations, who meant him mischief, obliged him to keep his doors thus closed. Bernage told him on what business he was travelling, and his host expressing his readiness to render the king his master all possible services, received his ambassador into his house, and lodged and treated him honorably. Supper-time being come, he showed him into a richly-tapestried hall, where, entering from behind the hangings, there appeared the most beautiful woman that ever was seen; but her hair was cropped close, and she was dressed in black garments of German cut. After the gentleman had washed with Bernage, water was set before this lady, who washed also, and took her seat at the end of the table without speaking to any one, or any one to her. Bernage often looked at her, and thought her one of the handsomest women he had ever seen, except that her face was very pale, and her air extremely sad. After she had eaten a little, she asked for drink, which was given to her by a domestic in a very singular vessel. This was a death's head, the holes of which were stopped with

silver; and out of this vessel she drank two or three times. After she had supped and washed, she made a reverence to the master of the house, and retired again behind the tapestry without speaking to any one.

Bernage was so surprised at this extraordinary spectacle that he became quite sombre and pensive. His host perceived this, and said to him, "You are surprised, I see, at what you have beheld at table. Now, the courteous demeanor I have marked in you does not permit me to make a secret of the matter to you, but to explain it, in order that you may not suppose me capable of acting so cruelly without great reason. That lady whom you have seen is my wife, whom I loved more than man ever loved woman. I risked everything to marry her, and I brought her hither in spite of her relations. She, too, evinced so much love for me, that I would have hazarded a thousand lives to obtain her. We lived long in such concord and pleasure that I esteemed myself the happiest gentleman in Christendom; but honor having obliged me to make a journey, she forgot hers and the love she had for me, and conceived a passion for a young gentleman I had brought up in this house. I was near discovering the fact on my return home, but I loved her so ardently that I could not bring myself to doubt her. At last, however, experience opened my eyes, and I saw what I feared more than death. The love I had felt for her changed into fury and despair. Feigning one day to go into the country, I hid myself in the chamber which she at present occupies. Soon after my pretended departure, she retired to it, and sent for the young gentleman. I saw him enter the room and take liberties with her which should have been reserved for me alone. When I saw him about to enter the bed with her, I issued from my hiding-place, seized him in her arms, and slew him. But as my wife's crime seemed to me so great that it would not have been a sufficient punishment for it had I killed her as I had killed her gallant, I imposed upon her one which I believe is more insupportable than death; which was, to shut her up in the chamber in which she used to enjoy her stolen pleasures. I have hung there in a press all the bones of her gallant as one hangs up something precious in a cabinet; and that she may not forget them at her meals, I have her served, as she sits opposite to me at table, with the skull of that ingrate

instead of a cup, in order that she may see living him whom she has made her mortal enemy by her crime, and dead, for her sake, him whose love she preferred to mine. In this way, when she dines and when she sups, she sees the two things which must afflict her most, namely, the living enemy and the dead friend ; and all this through her guilt. In other respects, I treat her as I do myself, except that her hair is cropped ; for the hair is an ornament no more appropriate to the adulteress than the veil to a harlot ; therefore, her cropped head denotes that she has lost honor and chastity. If you please to take the trouble to see her, I will take you into her room."

Bernage willingly accepted the offer, and going down stairs with his host, found the lady seated alone by an excellent fire in a very handsome chamber. The gentleman drew back a curtain which concealed a great press, and there he saw all the bones of a man suspended. Bernage had a great wish to speak to the lady, but durst not for fear of the husband, until the latter, guessing his thoughts, said to him, "If you like to say anything to her, you will see how she expresses herself."

"Your patience, madam," said Bernage, turning to her, "is equal to your torture ; I regard you as the most unhappy woman in the world."

The lady, with eyes filled with tears, and with incomparable grace and humility, replied, "I confess, sir, that my fault is so great, that all the ills which the master of this house, whom I am not worthy to call husband, could inflict upon me, are nothing in comparison to the grief I feel for having offended him." So saying, she wept profusely.

The gentleman took Bernage by the arm and led him away. Next morning he continued his journey upon the king's service ; but on taking leave of the gentleman he could not help saying to him, "The esteem I entertain for you, sir, and the courtesies you have shown me in your house, oblige me to tell you, that, in my opinion, considering the great repentance of your poor wife, you ought to forgive her ; the more so as you are young and have no children. It would be a pity that a house like yours should fall, and that those who perhaps do not love you should become inheritors of your substance."

The gentleman, who had resolved never to forgive his wife, pondered long over what Bernage had said to him, and at last,

owning that he had spoken the truth, promised that if she persevered in her present humility, he would forgive her after some time. Bernage, on his return to the court, related the whole story to the king, who directed inquiries to be made into the matter, and found that it was all just as Bernage had reported. The description he gave of the lady's beauty so pleased the king, that he sent his painter, Jean de Paris, to take her portrait exactly as she was, which he did with the husband's consent. After she had undergone a long penance, and always with the same humility, the gentleman, who longed much for children, took pity on his wife, reinstated her, and had by her several fine children.

If all those wives who have done the same sort of thing had to drink out of similar vessels, I am greatly afraid, ladies, that many a gilt cup would be turned into a death's-head. God keep us from the like, for, if His goodness does not restrain, there is not one of us but may do worse; but if we trust in Him, He will guard those who own that they cannot guard themselves. Those who rely on their own strength run great risk of being tempted, and of being constrained by experience to acknowledge their infirmity. I can assure you that there are many who have stumbled through pride in this way, whilst others, who were reputed less discreet, have been saved through their humility. The old proverb says truly, What God keeps is well kept.

"I look upon the punishment inflicted in this case as quite reasonable," said Parlamente; "for, as the offence was worse than death, so also ought the penalty to be."

"I am not of your opinion," said Ennasuite. "I would rather see the bones of all my lovers hung up in my cabinet all my life long than die for them. There is no misdeed that cannot be repaired, but from death there is no return."

"How can infamy be repaired?" asked Longarine. "Do what she may, you know that a woman cannot retrieve her honor after a crime of this nature."

"I should like to know," returned Ennasuite, "if the Magdalen is not now in more honor among men than her sister who was a virgin?"

"I admit," replied Longarine, "that we praise her for her

love for Jesus Christ, and for her great penitence; nevertheless, the name of sinner clings to her always."

"Much I care what name men give me," said Ennasuite; "only let me have God's pardon and my husband's too, there is no reason why I should wish to die."

"If this lady loved her husband as she ought," said Dagoucin, "I am surprised she did not die of grief at looking upon the bones of him whom her crime had brought to death."

"Why, Dagoucin," said Simontault, "have you yet to learn that women know neither love nor regret?"

"Yes," he replied, "for I have never ventured to prove their love for fear of finding it less than I should have wished."

"You live, then, on faith and hope," said Nomerfide, "as the plover lives on wind. You are easily kept."

"I content myself with the love I feel in my own heart," he replied, "and with the hope that there is the same in the hearts of ladies. But if I was quite sure that that love corresponded to my hope, I should feel a pleasure so extreme, that I could not sustain it and live."

"Keep yourself safe from the plague," said Geburon, "for as for the other malady, I warrant you against it. But let us see to whom Madame Oisille will give her voice."

"I give it," she said, "to Simontault, who I know will spare no one."

"That is as much as to say that I am rather given to evil speaking," said he. "I shall nevertheless let you see that people who have been regarded in that same light have yet spoken the truth. I believe, ladies, you are not so simple as to put faith in everything a person tells you, however sanctified an air he may assume, unless the proof is clear beyond doubt. Many an abuse is committed under the guise of a miracle. Therefore I intend to relate to you a story not less honorable to a religious prince than shameful to a wicked minister of the church."

NOVEL XXXIII.

Incest of a priest who got his sister with child under the cloak of sanctity, and how it was punished.

THE Count Charles d'Angoulême, father of Francis I., and a prince of great piety, being one day at Coignac, some one told him that in a village named Cherves there was a maiden who lived with such austerity that it was a marvel, yet she was with child, and did not even make any secret of it, but assured everybody that she had never known man, and that she knew not how it had happened to her, unless it was the work of the Holy Ghost. The people readily gave credit to this delusion, and looked upon the girl as a second Virgin Mary, the more so as she had been known to be so well-behaved from her childhood, and never to have shown the least sign of a disposition to mundane vanities. She not only fasted at the seasons appointed by the church, but also made several voluntary fasts every week, and never stirred from the church as long as there was any service going on in it. The common people made so much account of this manner of life, that every one flocked to see her as though she were a living miracle, and fortunate was he who could touch her gown. The priest of the parish was her brother, a man in years, of an austere life, and a reputed saint. So rigorously did he treat his sister, that he had her shut up in a house, whereat the people were greatly displeased, and the affair made so much noise, that it came, as I have already said, to the ears of Count Charles, who seeing the delusion into which everybody had fallen, resolved to put an end to it.

To this end, he sent a referendary and an almoner, both of them worthy men, to ascertain the truth. They went to the spot, inquired into the fact as carefully as possible, and applied to the priest, who was so vexed at the affair, that he begged them to be present at the verification he hoped to make of it. Next morning the priest celebrated mass, his sister, who was very big, being present on her knees. After it was over, he took the *corpus Domini*, and said to his sister in presence of

the whole congregation, "Wretch that thou art, here is He who suffered death for thee, in whose presence I ask thee if thou art a virgin as thou has always assured me." She replied boldly and fearlessly that she was so. "How, then, is it possible that thou art pregnant, yet still a virgin?" "All I can say," she replied, "is, that it is the grace of the Holy Ghost, who does in me whatever he pleases; but also I cannot deny the grace which God has done me in preserving me a virgin. Never have I had even a thought of marrying."

Her brother then said to her, "I give thee here the precious body of Jesus Christ, which thou wilt take to thy damnation if thou dost not speak the truth; whereof will be witnesses these gentlemen, who are here present on the part of my lord the count."

The girl, who was about thirteen years of age, then made oath as follows: "I take the body of Our Lord here present to my condemnation before you, sirs, and you my brother, if ever man has touched me any more than you." So saying, she received the body of Our Lord.

The refendary and the almoner went away quite confounded, not being able to believe that any one would lie after such an oath, and they made their report to the count, whom they tried to bring to entertain the same belief as themselves. But he being a wise man, after much thought, made them repeat the very words of the oath; and having well weighed them, he said, "She told you that *never man touched her any more than her brother*. I am persuaded that it was her brother who got her with child, and that she seeks to conceal his incest by prevarication. We, who believe that Jesus Christ is come, must not expect another. Return then to the place, and put the priest in prison; I am sure he will confess the truth."

They executed their orders, but unwillingly, and not without remonstrating against the necessity of putting such a scandal upon a good man. The priest was no sooner committed to prison than he confessed his crime, and owned that he had instructed his sister to speak as she had done, in order to conceal the intercourse between them, and this not only to baffle inquiry by so slight a device, but also to secure to themselves universal esteem and veneration by this false statement. Being asked how he could carry his wickedness to such an excess as

to make his sister swear upon Our Lord's body, he replied, that his audacity had not reached that length, and that he had used an ordinary wafer, which was neither consecrated nor blessed.

All this having been reported to the Count d'Angoulême, he sent the affair before the courts of justice. Execution was delayed until the sister was delivered of a fine boy. After her delivery the brother and sister were burned, to the great astonishment of all the people, who had beheld a monster so horrible under such a garb of holiness, and so detestable a crime under the appearances of a life so laudable and regenerate.

The good Count d'Angoulême's faith, ladies, was proof against outward signs and miracles. He knew that we have but one Saviour, who when he said *consummatum est*, showed thereby that we are not to expect a successor for our salvation.

"Truly," said Oisille, "that was a monstrous piece of effrontery covered with unparalleled hypocrisy. It is the height of impiety to cover so enormous a crime with the mantle of God and religion."

"I have heard," said Hircan, "that those who commit acts of cruelty and tyranny under pretence of having the king's commission, are doubly punished, the reason being that they make the king's name a cover for their injustice. Likewise, it is seen, that although hypocrites prosper for some time under the cloak of godliness, God no sooner unmasks them, than they appear such as they are; and then their nakedness, their filth, and their infamy are the more horrible the more august and sacred was the wrapper with which they concealed them."

"There is nothing more agreeable," said Nomerfide, "than to speak frankly and as the heart feels."

"It serves to make one fat," replied Longarine, "and I imagine you decide from your own case."

"Let me tell you," returned Nomerfide, "I remark that fools live longer than the wise, unless some one kills them; for which I know but one reason, namely, that fools do not dissemble their passions. If they are angry they strike; if they

are merry they laugh ; but those who deem themselves wise hide their defects with so much care that their hearts are all poisoned with them."

"I believe that is true," said Geburon, "and that hypocrisy, whether as regards God, men, or nature, is the cause of all the evil that befalls us."

"It would be a fine thing," said Parlamente, "if faith so filled our hearts with Him who is all virtue and all joy, that we should show them to every one without disguise."

"That will be when there is no longer any flesh on our bones," observed Hircan.

"Yet," remarked Oisille, "the spirit of God, which is mightier than death, can change our hearts without changing our bodies."

"You speak, madam," said Saffredent, "of a gift which God hardly makes to men."

"He does make it," rejoined Oisille, "to those who have faith. But as this is a matter above the comprehension of flesh, let us see to whom Simontault gives his voice."

"To Nomerfide," he said. "As she has a merry heart, I do not think her words will be sad."

"Since you have a mind to laugh," said Nomerfide, "I must serve you after your own way, and give you matter for laughter. I wish to show you that fear and ignorance are equally mischievous, and that one often sins only for want of knowing things. With this view I will relate to you what happened to two poor Cordeliers of Niort, who, for not understanding the language of a butcher, had like to die of fright."

NOVEL XXXIV.

Two over-inquisitive Cordeliers had a great fright, which had like to cost them their lives.

BETWEEN Niort and Fors there is a village named Grip, which belongs to the Lord of Fors. Two Cordeliers of Niort arrived late one night at this village, and took up their quarters with a butcher. As their bedroom was separated from their

host's only by an ill-jointed boarded partition, they had a mind to listen to what passed between the husband and wife, and they clapped their ears to the partition close to the head of the host's bed. As the butcher had no suspicion of his guests, he talked to his wife about his business, and said, "My dear, I must be up betimes to-morrow, and see about our Cordeliers. One of them is very fat; we will kill him and salt him forthwith, and we shall make a good thing of him."

Though the butcher talked of his pigs, which he called Cordeliers, the two poor friars, hearing this, set it all down to their own account, and awaited daylight with great terror. One of them was very fat, the other very lean; and the fat one set about confessing himself to his companion, alleging that a butcher, having lost the love and fear of God, would make no more of slaughtering them than an ox or any other beast. As they were shut up in their chamber, from which there was no issue but through their host's, they gave themselves up for dead men, and earnestly commended their souls to God. The young man, who was not so overcome by fear as the elder, said to him, that since they could not get out at the door, they must try to escape through the window; at the worst they could only be killed in the attempt, and death one way or the other was the same thing in the end. The fat friar consented to the expedient. The young one opened the window, and, as it was not very high, dropped lightly to the ground, and ran away as fast and as far as he could, without waiting for his companion, who was not so lucky, for, being very bulky, he fell so heavily that he hurt one leg severely, and was unable to rise from the ground. Deserted by his companion, and unable to follow him, he looked about for some place where he might hide, and saw nothing but a pigsty, into which he dragged himself the best way he could. When he opened the door, two big porkers which were inside rushed out and left the place free to the Cordelier, who shut himself in, hoping that he might hear people passing by, to whom he would call and obtain help.

As soon as daylight appeared the butcher got ready his big knives, and told his wife to come and help him to kill the two pigs. Going to the sty, he opened the little door, and cried out, "Come, turn out here, my Cordelier. I'll have your chit-

terlings for my dinner to-day." The Cordelier, who could not stand on his leg, crawled out on his hands and knees, roaring for mercy. If he was in a great fright, the butcher and his wife were no less so. The first idea that came into their heads was that St. Francis was angry with them because they had called pigs Cordeliers; and under that notion they fell on their knees before the poor friar, begging pardon of St. Francis and his order. On the one side was the Cordelier, bawling for mercy to the butcher, on the other side, the butcher making the same appeal to the Cordelier. At last the Cordelier, finding that the butcher had no intention of hurting him, told him why he had hid himself in that place. Fear then gave place to laughter, except on the part of the poor friar, whose leg pained him so much that he had no inclination to laugh. The butcher, to console him in some degree, took him back to the house and had his hurt carefully attended to. As for his companion, who had forsaken him in distress, he ran all night, and arrived in the morning at the house of the Lord of Fors, where he made loud complaints of the butcher, who, he supposed, had by that time killed his companion, since the latter had not followed him. The Lord of Fors sent immediately to Grip to see how matters stood, and his messengers brought back matter for laughter, which he failed not to communicate to his mistress, the Duchess d'Angoulême, mother of Francis I.

It is not good, ladies, to listen to secrets when one is not invited, and to have a curiosity to hear what others say.

"Did not I tell you," exclaimed Simontault, "that Nomerfide would not make us cry, but laugh? Every one of us, I think, has done so very heartily."

"Whence comes it," said Oisille, "that one is always more disposed to laugh at a piece of nonsense than at a good thing?"

"Because," replied Hircan, "the nonsense is more agreeable to us, being more conformable to our own nature, which of itself is never wise. Thus every one is fond of his like: fools love folly, and wise men wisdom. I am sure, however, that neither fools nor wise could help laughing at this story."

"There are some," said Geburon, "who are so engrossed with the love of wisdom that nothing you could say to them

would make them laugh. Their joy and their satisfaction are so moderate, that no accident is capable of altering them."

"Who are these persons?" inquired Hircan.

"The philosophers of past times," replied Geburon, "who hardly felt either mirth or sadness; at least they showed no manifestation of either, so possessed were they with the belief that there is virtue in vanquishing oneself."

"I am as much convinced as they that it is good to vanquish a vicious passion," said Sagredent, "but to vanquish a natural passion, which has no evil tendency, seems to me a useless victory."

"Nevertheless, that was regarded as a great virtue," remarked Geburon.

"But then," returned Saffredent, "it is not said that all the ancients were sages; and I would not swear that there was not in them more of the appearance of sense and virtue than of the reality."

"You see, however," said Geburon, "that they condemn everything that is bad, and even that Diogenes trampled on Plato's coverlet, because he thought it too rich and curious, and to show that he despised and wished to trample under foot Plato's vainglory and avarice, 'I trample,' said he, 'on the pride of Plato.'"

"You do not tell all," replied Saffredent; "you forget that Plato at once retorted upon him, 'Thou tramplest on it, indeed, but with still more pride.' In fact, it was only through a certain arrogance that Diogenes despised elegance."

"In truth," said Parlamente, "it is impossible to overcome ourselves by ourselves; nor can one think to do so without prodigious pride, the vice of all others the most to be feared, since it rears itself upon the ruins of all the rest."

"Did I not read to you this morning," said Oisille, "that those who believed themselves wiser than others, and who came by the light of reason to know a God, the creator of all things, for having been vain thereof, and not having attributed this glory to Him to whom it belonged, and for having imagined that they had acquired this knowledge by their own labors, became more ignorant and less reasonable, I will not say than other men, but than the very brutes? In fact, their minds having run astray, they ascribed to themselves what belongs to

God alone, and manifested their errors by the disorders of their lives, forgetting their very sex, and abusing it, as St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans."

"There is not one of us," said Parlamente, "but recognizes, on reading that epistle, that outward sins are the fruits of inward unbelief, the more dangerous to eradicate the more it is covered by virtue and miracles."

"We men," said Hircan, "are nearer to salvation than women, for as they do not hide their fruits they easily know their roots. But you women, who dare not produce yours, and who do so many acts that are fair in appearance, hardly know the root of pride, that grows under so goodly a covering."

"I own," said Longarine, "that if God's word does not show us by faith the leprosy of unbelief that is hidden in our hearts, God does us a great grace when He suffers us to commit a visible fault, which manifests our hidden disposition. Blessed are they whom faith has so humbled that they have no need of outward acts to make them conscious of the weakness and corruption of their natures."

"Do let us consider, I beseech you," said Simontault, "what a course our conversation has taken. From an instance of extreme folly we have come to philosophy and theology. Let us leave these matters to those who are more competent to discuss them, and ask Nomerfide to whom she gives her voice."

"To Hircan," she replied, "but on condition that he will be tender of the honor of the ladies."

"The condition fits me very aptly," said Hircan, "for the story I have to tell you is the very one to fulfil it. You shall see from it, nevertheless, that the inclination of men and of women is naturally vicious, unless it be kept right by the goodness of Him to whom we ought to impute all the victories we achieve over ourselves. And to abate the airs you give yourselves when any story is told which does you honor, I will tell you one which is strictly true."

NOVEL XXXV.

Contrivance of a sensible husband to cure his wife of her passion for
a Cordelier.

THERE was at Pampelune a lady who was reputed fair and virtuous, and at the same time the most devout and chaste in the country. She loved her husband much, and was so obsequious to him that he had entire confidence in her. She was wholly occupied with God's service, and never missed a single sermon, and omitted nothing by which she could hope to persuade her husband and her children to be as devout as herself, who was but thirty years old, an age at which women commonly resign the pretensions of beauties for those of new she-sages.

On the first day of Lent this lady went to church to receive the ashes which are a memorial of death. A Cordelier, whose austerity of life had gained him the reputation of a saint, and who, in spite of his austerity and his macerations, was neither so meagre nor so pale but that he was one of the handsomest men in the world, was to preach the sermon. The lady listened to him with great devotion, and gazed no less intently on the preacher. Her ears and her eyes lost nothing that was presented to them, and both alike found wherewithal to be gratified. The preacher's words penetrated to her heart through her ears; and the charms of his countenance passing through her eyes, insinuated themselves so deeply into her mind, that she felt as it were in an ecstasy. The sermon being ended, the Cordelier celebrated mass, at which the lady was present, and she took the ashes from his hand, which was as white and shapely as that of any lady. The devotee paid much more attention to the monk's hand than to the ashes he gave her, persuading herself that this spiritual love could not hurt her conscience, whatever pleasure she received from it. She failed not to go every day to the sermon, and to take her husband with her; and both so highly admired the preacher, that at table and elsewhere they talked of nothing but him.

This fire, for all its spirituality, at last became so carnal, that the heart of this poor lady, which was first kindled by it consumed all the rest. Slow as she had been to feel the flame

she was equally prompt to take fire, and she felt the pleasure of her passion before she was aware that passion had possession of her. Love, which had rendered himself master of the lady, no longer encountered any resistance on her part; but the mischief was, that the physician who might have relieved her pain was not aware of her malady. Banishing, therefore, all fear, and the shame she ought to have felt in exposing her wild fantasy to so sober-minded a man, and her incontinence to one so saintly and virtuous, she resolved to acquaint him in writing of the love she cherished for him; which she did as modestly as she could, and gave her letter to a little page, with instructions as to what he was to do, especially enjoining him to take good care that her husband did not see him go to the Cordeliers.

The page, taking the shortest road, passed through a street where his master happened, by the merest chance, to be sitting in a shop. The gentleman seeing him pass, stepped forward to see which way he was going; and the page perceiving this, hid himself with some trepidation. His master saw this, followed him, and seizing him by the arm, asked him whither he was going. His embarrassed and unmeaning replies, and his manifest fright, aroused the suspicions of the gentleman, who threatened to beat him if he did not tell the truth. "Oh, sir," said the little page, "if I tell you, my mistress will kill me." The gentleman no longer doubted that his wife was making a bargain without him, encouraged the page, and assured him that nothing should befall him if he spoke the truth—on the contrary, he should be well rewarded; but if he told a lie, he should be imprisoned for life. Thus urged by fear and hope, the page acquainted him with the real fact, and showed him the letter his mistress had written to the preacher, whereat the husband was the more shocked, as he had been all his life assured of the fidelity of his wife, in whom he had never seen a fault.

Being a wise man, however, he dissembled his anger, and further to try his wife, he answered her letter in the preacher's name, thanking her for her gracious inclination, and assuring her that it was fully reciprocated. The page, after being sworn by his master to manage the affair discreetly, carried this letter to his mistress, who was so transported with joy, that

her husband perceived it by the change in her countenance; for instead of her fastings in Lent having emaciated her, she looked handsomer and fresher than ever. It was now Mid-Lent, but the lady, without concerning herself about the Lord's Passion or the Holy Week, wrote as usual to the preacher, the theme being always her amorous rage. When he turned his eyes in her direction, or spoke of the love of God, she always imagined that he addressed himself covertly to her, and so far as her eyes could explain what was passing in her heart, she did not suffer them to be idle.

The husband, who regularly replied to her in the name of the Cordelier, wrote to her after Easter, begging she would contrive to give him a meeting in private; and she, impatiently longing for an opportunity to do so, advised her husband to go see some land they had near Pampelune. He said he would do so, and went and concealed himself in the house of one of his friends; whereupon the lady wrote to the Cordelier that her husband was in the country, and that he might come and see her.

The gentleman, wishing to prove his wife's heart thoroughly, went and begged the preacher to lend him his robe. The Cordelier, who was a good man, replied that his rule forbade him to do so, and that for no consideration would he lend his robe to go masking in. The gentleman assured him it was not for any idle diversion he wanted it, but for an important matter, and one necessary to his salvation; whereupon the Cordelier, who knew him to be a worthy, pious man, lent him the robe. The gentleman then procured a false beard and a false nose, put cork in his shoes to make himself as tall as the monk, put on the robe, which covered the greater part of his face, so that his eyes were barely seen, and, in a word, dressed himself up so that he might easily be mistaken for the preacher. Thus disguised, he stole by night into his wife's chamber, where she was expecting him in great devotion. The poor creature did not wait for him to come to her, but ran to embrace him like a woman out of her senses. Keeping his head down to avoid being recognized, he began to make the sign of the cross, pretending to shun her, and crying, "Temptation! temptation!"

"Alas! you are right, father," said she, "for there is no

more violent temptation than that which proceeds from love. You have promised to afford me relief, and I pray you to have pity on me now that we have time and opportunity."

So saying she made great efforts to embrace him, while he kept dodging her in all directions, still making great signs of the cross, and crying, "Temptation! temptation!" But when he found that she was pressing him too closely, he drew a stout stick from under his robe, and thrashed her so soundly that he put an end to the temptation. This done, he left the house without being known, and immediately returned his borrowed robe, assuring the owner that he had used it to great advantage. Next day he returned home as if from a journey, and found his wife in bed. Pretending not to know the nature of her malady, he asked her what ailed her. She replied that she was troubled with a kind of catarrh, and that she could neither move hand nor foot. The husband, who had a great mind to laugh, pretended to be very sorry, and by way of cheering her, said that he had invited the pious preacher to supper. "Oh, my dear!" said she, "don't think of inviting such people, for they bring ill-luck wherever they go."

"Why, my love," replied the husband, "you know how much you have said to me in praise of this good father. For my part, I believe if there is a holy man on earth, it is he."

"They are all very well at church and in the pulpit," she rejoined; "but in private houses they are antichrists. Don't let me see him, my dear, I entreat you, for, ill as I am, it would be the death of me."

"Well, you shall not see him, since you do not choose to do so; but I cannot help having him to supper."

"Do as you please," said she; "only, for mercy's sake, let me not set eyes on him, for I cannot endure such folk."

After entertaining the Cordelier at supper, the husband said to him, "I look upon you, father, as a man so beloved by God, that I am sure he will grant any prayer of yours. I entreat you, then, to have pity on my poor wife. She has been possessed these eighteen days by an evil spirit, so that she wants to bite and scratch everybody, and neither cross nor holy water does she care for one bit; but I believe firmly, that if you put your hand on her, the devil will go away. From my heart, I beseech you to do so."

"All things are possible to him who believes, my son," replied the good father. "Are you not well assured that God never refuses his grace to those who ask for it with faith?"

"I am assured of this, father."

"Be assured also, my son, that He is able and willing, and that He is not less mighty than munificent. Let us strengthen ourselves in faith to resist this roaring lion, and snatch from him his prey, which God has made His own by the blood of his Son Jesus Christ."

Thereupon the gentleman conducted the excellent man into the room where his wife was resting on a couch. Believing that it was he who had beaten her, she was roused to a prodigious degree of fury at the sight of him, but her husband's presence made her hang down her head and hold her tongue. "As long as I am present," said the husband to the good father, "the devil does not torment; but as soon as I leave her, you will sprinkle her with holy water, and then you will see how violently the evil spirit works her." So saying, the husband left him alone with his wife, and stopped outside the door to see what would ensue.

When she found herself alone with the Cordelier, she began to scream at him like a mad woman, "Villain! cheat! monster! murderer!" The Cordelier, believing in good faith that she was possessed, wanted to take hold of her head, in order to pray over it; but she scratched and bit him so fiercely that he was obliged to stand further off, throwing plenty of holy water over her, and saying many good prayers. The husband, seeing it was time to put an end to the farce, entered the room again, and thanked the Cordelier for the pains he had taken. The moment he appeared there was an end to the wife's ter-magant behavior, and she meekly kissed the cross for fear of her husband. The pious Cordelier, who had seen her in such a fury, believed firmly that our Lord had expelled the devil at his prayer, and went away praising God for this miracle. The husband, seeing his wife so well cured of her folly, would never tell her what he had done, contenting himself with having brought her back to the right way by his prudence, and having put her into such a frame of mind that she mortally hated what she had so unwisely loved, and was filled with detestation for her own infatuation. Thenceforth she was weaned from all

superstition, and devoted herself to her husband and her family in a very different way from what she had done before.

Here you may see, ladies, the good sense of the husband, and the weakness of one who was regarded as a woman of strict propriety. If you attend well to this example, I am persuaded that, instead of relying on your own strength, you will learn to turn to Him on whom your honor depends.

"I am very glad," said Parlamente, "that you are become the ladies' preacher; you would be so with better right if you would address the same sermons to all those you hold discourse with."

"Whenever you please to hear me," he replied, "I assure you I will speak the same language to you."

"That is to say," observed Simontault, "that when you are not by he will talk to a different purpose."

"He will do as he pleases," said Parlamente; "but, for my own satisfaction, I would have him always speak thus. The example he has adduced will at least be of service to those women who think that spiritual love is not dangerous; but to me it seems that it is more so than any other."

"I cannot think, however," remarked Oisille, "that one should scorn to love a man who is virtuous and fears God; for, in my opinion, one cannot but be the better for it."

"I pray you to believe, madam," rejoined Parlamente, "that nothing can be more simple-willed and easy to deceive than a woman who has never loved; for love is a passion which takes possession of the heart before one is aware of it. Besides, this passion is so pleasing, that provided one can wrap oneself up in virtue as in a cloak, it will be scarcely known before some mischief will come of it."

"What mischief can come of loving a good man?" said Oisille.

"There are plenty, madam," replied Parlamente, "who pass for good men as far as ladies are concerned; but there are few who are so truly good before God that one may love them without any risk to honor or conscience. I do not believe that there is one such man living. Those who are of a different opinion, and trust in it, become its dupes. They begin this sort of tender intimacy with God, and often end it

with the devil. I have seen many a one who, under color of talking about divine things, began an intimacy which at last they wished to break off but could not, so fast were they held by the fine cloak with which it was covered. A vicious love perishes and has no long abode in a good heart; but decorous love has bonds of silk so fine and delicate that one is caught in them before one perceives them."

"According to your views, then," said Ennasuite, "no woman ought ever to love a man. Your law is too violent; it will not last."

"I know that," replied Parlamente; "but for all that it is desirable that every woman should be content with her own husband, as I am with mine."

Ennasuite, taking these words personally, changed color, and said, "You ought to think every one the same at heart as yourself, unless you set yourself up for being more perfect than the rest of your sex."

"To avoid dispute," said Parlamente, "let us see to whom Hircan will give his voice."

"I give it to Ennasuite," said he, "in order to make up matters between her and my wife."

"Since it is my turn to speak," said Ennasuite, "I will spare neither man nor woman, so as to make both sides even. You find it hard to overcome yourselves and admit the probity and virtue of men. This obliges me to relate a story of the same nature as the preceding one."

NOVEL XXXVI.

A President of Grenoble, becoming aware of his wife's irregularities, took his measures so wisely, that he revenged himself without any public exposure of his dishonor.

THERE was at Grenoble a president whose name I shall not mention. It is enough to say that he was not a Frenchman, that he had a very handsome wife, and that they lived very happily together. The husband, however, being old, the lady thought fit to love a young clerk named Nicolas. When the husband went in the morning to the Palace of Justice, the

clerk used to step into the bedchamber and take his place. An old domestic of the president's, who had been in his service for thirty years, discovered this, and as a faithful servant, could not help revealing it to his master. The president, who was a prudent man, would not believe the fact without inquiry, and told the servant that he wanted to create dissension between him and his wife; adding, that if the fact was as he stated, he could easily give him ocular proof of it; and if he failed to do so, then he, the president, would believe that the servant had trumped up this lying tale to make mischief between husband and wife. The valet assured him that he should see what he had told him.

One morning when the president had gone to the palace, and the clerk had stolen into the bedroom as usual, the valet sent one of his fellow-servants to apprise the president, while he himself remained on the watch before the bedroom door, to see if Nicolas came out. The president, on seeing the messenger beckon to him, immediately quitted the court on pretence of sudden illness, and hurried home, where he found his old servant standing sentry at the bedroom door, and was assured by him that Nicolas was inside, having gone in not long before. "Remain at the door," said the president. "There is no other way to get in or out of the room as thou knowest, except a little closet, of which I always keep the key."

The president enters the room, and finds his wife and the clerk in bed together. Nicolas, who did not expect such a visit, threw himself in his shirt at his master's feet and implored pardon, whilst the lady fell a crying. "Though what you have done," said the president to her, "is as bad as it can be, I do not choose to have the credit of my house blasted for you, and the daughters I have had by you made the sufferers. I command you, then, to cease your crying, and see what I am going to do. As for you, Nicolas," said he to the clerk, "hide yourself in my cabinet, and make no noise." Nicolas having done as he ordered, he opened the door, and calling in the old servant, said to him, "Didst thou not assure me thou wouldst show me my clerk in bed with my wife? I came hither on the strength of thy word, and thought to kill my wife. I have found nothing, though I have searched everywhere. Search thyself, under the beds and in all directions."

The valet, having searched and found nothing, said to his master, "The devil must have flown away with him; for I saw him go in, and he did not come out by the door; however, I see he is not here."

"Thou art a very bad servant," said his master, "to want to put such division between my wife and me. Begone, I discharge thee, and for the services thou has rendered me, I will pay thee what I owe thee and more; but get thee gone quickly, and beware how thou art found in this city after twenty-four hours are past."

The president paid him his wages, and five or six years over; and as he had reason to be satisfied with his fidelity, he resolved within himself to reward him still more. When the valet had gone away, with tears in his eyes, the president called the clerk out of the cabinet, and after having given him and his wife such a lecture as they deserved, he forbade them both to give the least hint of the matter to any one. His wife he ordered to dress more elegantly than she had been used to do, and to let herself be seen at all parties and entertainments. As to the clerk, he ordered him to make better cheer than before; but that as soon as he should whisper in his ear the words "Go away," he should take good care not to remain three hours longer in the city.

For a fortnight the president did nothing but feast his friends and neighbors, contrary to his previous custom, and after the repast he gave a ball to the ladies. One day, seeing that his wife did not dance, he ordered the clerk to dance with her. The clerk, thinking he had forgotten the past, danced gaily with the lady; but when the ball was over, the president, feigning to have some order to give him about household matters, whispered in his ear, "Begone, and never come back." Sore loth was Nicolas to leave the lady-president, but very glad to get off safe and sound. After the president had fully impressed all his relations and friends, and all the inhabitants of Grenoble, with the belief that he was very fond of his wife, he went one fine day in the month of May into his garden to gather a salad. I do not know what herbs it was composed of; but I know that his wife did not live twenty-four hours after eating of it, whereat he appeared greatly afflicted, and played the disconsolate widower so well, that no

one ever suspected him of having killed her. In this way he revenged himself and saved the honor of his house.*

I do not pretend, ladies, to laud the president's conscience ; but my design is to exhibit the levity of a woman, and the great patience and prudence of a man. Do not be offended, ladies, I beseech you, with the truth, which sometimes tells against you as well as against the men ; for women, too, have their vices as well as their virtues.

"If all those who have intrigued with their valets were compelled to eat such salads," said Parlamente, "I know those who would not be so fond of their gardens as they are, but would pluck up all the herbs in them, to avoid those which save the honor of children at the expense of a wanton mother's life."

Hircan, who guessed for whom she meant this, replied with great warmth, "A woman of honor should never suspect another of things she would not do herself."

* In a manuscript French dictionary of the Beauties and Curiosities of Dauphiné, there is an article which says that "in the Rue des Clercs, at Grenoble, was formerly to be seen over the hall door of the house of Nicholas Prunier de Saint André, president of the Parliament of Grenoble, a stone escutcheon, supported by an angel, and bearing a lion de gueule on a field or. These arms were those of the Carles family, which became extinct in the seventeenth century. The angel that supported the escutcheon held the forefinger of one hand to his mouth in a mysterious manner, as if to enjoin secrecy. Geoffroy Carles, sole president of the Parliament of Grenoble in 1505, put it up over that house, which belonged to him. He, indeed, had long dissembled before he found an opportunity to be revenged for the infidelity of his wife, by causing her to be drowned by the mule she rode at the passage of a torrent. He had purposely ordered that the mule should be left several days without drink. This occurrence, which appeared in print in several places, was made the subject of one of the novels of that time, in which, however, the names of the persons concerned are not given. Geoffroy was so learned in the Latin tongue and in the humanities, that Queen Anne of Bretagne, wife of Louis XII., selected him to teach that tongue and the belles lettres to her daughter Renée, who was afterwards Duchess of Ferrara. This same Geoffroy Carles was made knight of arms and of laws by Louis XII. in 1509." This is probably the person meant by the Queen of Navarre, though she gives a different account of the manner in which he put his wife to death. The story, however, appears to be older than the times of Geoffroy Carles, since it is related of a president of Provence in the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (No. 47), which were composed between the years 1456 and 1461, and first printed in Paris in 1486.

"To know is not to suspect," rejoined Parlamente. "However, this poor woman paid the penalty which many deserve. Moreover, I think that the president, being bent on avenging himself, could not set about it with more prudence and discretion."

"Nor with more malice," Longarine subjoined. "It was a cold-blooded and cruel vengeance, which plainly showed that he respected neither God nor his conscience."

"What would you have had him do then," said Hircan, "to revenge the most intolerable outrage a wife can ever offer to her husband?"

"I would have had him kill her," she answered, "in the first transports of his indignation. The doctors say that such a sin is more pardonable, because a man is not master of such emotions; and consequently, the sin he commits in that state may be forgiven."

"Yes," said Geburon, "but his daughters and his descendants would have been disgraced for ever."

"He ought not to have poisoned her," said Longarine, "for since his first great wrath was past, she might have lived with him like an honest woman, and nothing would ever have been said about the matter."

"Do you suppose," said Saffredent, "that he was appeased, though he pretended to be so? For my part, I'm persuaded that the day he mixed his salad his wrath was as hot as on the very first day. There are people whose first emotions never subside until they have accomplished the dictates of their passion."

"It is well to ponder one's words," said Parlamente, "when one has to do with people so dangerous as you. What I said is to be understood of an anger so violent, that it suddenly engrosses the senses, and hinders reason from acting."

"I take it in that very sense," replied Saffredent, "and I say, that of two men who commit a fault, he who is very amorous is more pardonable than the other who is not so; for when one loves well, reason is not easily mistress. If we would speak truly, we must own there is not one of us but has some time or other experienced that furious madness, and yet hopes for grace. Let us say then, that true love is a ladder by which to ascend to the perfect love which we owe to God. No one

can ascend to it but through the afflictions and calamities of this world, and through the love of his neighbor, to whom he ought to wish as much good as to himself. This is the true bond of perfection ; for as St John says, ‘ How can you love God whom you do not see, unless you love your neighbor whom you do see?’ ”

“ There is no fine text in Scripture which you may not warp to your own purposes,” said Oisille. “ Beware of doing like the spider, which extracts a poison from every good viand ; for I warn you, that it is dangerous to quote Scripture out of place, and without necessity.”

“ Do you mean to say, then,” returned Saffredent, “ that when we talk to your unbelieving sex, and call God to our aid, we take His name in vain ? If there is sin in this, it all lies at your door, since your unbelief constrains us to use all the oaths we can think of ; and even so we cannot kindle your icy hearts.”

“ A plain proof,” said Longarine, “ that you all lie ; for if you spoke the truth, it is so potent that it would persuade us. All that is to be feared is lest the daughters of Eve too easily believe in the serpent.”

“ I see plainly how it is,” said Saffredent ; “ the women are invincible. So I give up the game to see on whom Ennasuite will call.”

“ On Dagoucín,” she said, “ who, I think, will not be disposed to speak against the ladies.”

“ Would to God,” said he, “ that they were as favorable to me as I am disposed to speak so of them. To show you that I have endeavored to do honor to the virtuous of their sex by the pains I have taken to learn their good actions, I will relate one of these to you. I will not say, ladies, that the patience of the gentleman of Pampelune and of the president of Grenoble was not great, but I maintain that their vindictiveness was no less so. In praising a virtuous man, we must not so much exalt a single virtue, as to make it serve as a cloak and cover for so great a vice. A woman who has done a virtuous action for the love of virtue itself is truly laudable. An instance of this I will give you in the story I am about to tell you of a young married lady, whose good deed had for motive only the honor of God and the salvation of her husband.”

NOVEL XXXVII.

Judicious proceedings of a wife to withdraw her husband from a low intrigue with which he was infatuated.

THERE was a lady of the house of Loue who was so good and virtuous, that she was loved and esteemed by all her neighbors. Her husband with good reason confided to her all his affairs, which she managed so discreetly, that in a short while their house became under her hands one of the richest and best furnished in Anjou and Touraine. She lived long with her husband, and had several fine children by him ; but as there is no enduring felicity here below, hers began to be crossed. Her husband, not feeling satisfied with a life of such perfect ease, had a mind to try if trouble would increase his enjoyment. His wife was no sooner asleep, than he used to get up from beside her, and not return till daylight. The lady took this conduct so much to heart, that falling into a profound melancholy, which yet she tried to conceal, she neglected the affairs of her house, her person, and her family, thinking she had lost the fruit of her labors in losing her husband's love, to preserve which there were no pains she would not willingly have sustained. But as she saw he was lost to her, she became so negligent of everything else, that the consequences were soon seen in the mischief that ensued. On the one hand, the husband spent without order and measure ; on the other hand, the wife no longer attending to the affairs of the house, they soon became so involved, that the timber began to be felled, and the lands to be mortgaged. One of her relations who knew her secret grief, remonstrated with her on the fault she committed, and told her, that if she did not regard the fortunes of the family for her husband's sake, she ought at least to consider her poor children. This argument struck her ; she rallied her spirits, and resolved to try by every means to regain her husband's love.

Next night, perceiving that he rose from beside her, she also got up, put on her night-wrapper, had her bed made, and sat down to read for hours until his return. When he entered the room, she went up and kissed him, and presented a basin

and water to him to wash his hands. Her husband, astonished at this extraordinary behavior, told her that he had only been to the privy, and that he had no need to wash. She replied, that although it was no great matter, still it was decent to wash one's hands when one came from so nasty a place, thereby wishing to make him know and hate his wicked way of life. As this did not produce any amendment in him, she continued the same course of proceeding for a year, but still without success.

This being the case, one night, when she was waiting for her husband, who stayed away longer than usual, she took it into her head to go after him. She did so, and looking for him in chamber after chamber, she at last found him in a back lumber-room in bed with the ugliest and dirtiest servant wench about the house. To teach him to quit so handsome and so cleanly a wife for so ugly and frousy a servant, she took some straw and set it on fire in the middle of the room. But seeing that the smoke would as soon smother her husband as awake him, she pulled him by the arm, crying out "Fire! fire!" If the husband was ashamed and confounded at being found by so worthy a wife with such a swinish bedfellow, it was not without great reason. "For more than a year, sir," said his wife, "have I been endeavoring by gentleness and patience to withdraw you from such a wicked life, and make you comprehend that, while washing the outside, you ought to make the inside clean also; but when I saw that all my efforts were useless, I bethought me of employing the element which is to put an end to all things. If this does not correct you, sir, I know not if I shall be able another time to withdraw you from the danger as I have done now. I pray you to consider that there is no greater despair than that of slighted love, and that if I had not had God before my eyes, I could not have been patient so long."

The husband, glad to be let off so cheaply, promised that for the future he would never give her cause for sorrow. The wife gladly believed him, and with his consent turned away the servant who offended her. They lived so happily afterwards, that even past faults were for them a source of increased satisfaction, in consequence of the good that had resulted from them.

If God gives you such husbands, ladies, do not despair, I entreat you, before you have tried all means to reclaim them. There are four-and-twenty hours in the day, and there is not a moment in which a man may not change his mind. A wife ought to esteem herself happier in having regained her husband by her patience, than if fortune and her relations had given her one more faultless.*

"There," said Oisille, "is an example for all married women to follow."

"Follow it who will," said Parlamente; "but for my part it would be impossible for me to be so patient. Although, in every condition in which one is placed, patience is a fine virtue, it seems to me, nevertheless, that in matrimonial matters it at last produces enmity. The reason is, that suffering from one's mate, one is constrained to keep aloof from the offender as much as possible. From this alienation springs contempt for the faithless one, and this contempt gradually diminishes love; for one loves a thing only in proportion as one esteems it."

"But it is to be feared," said Ennasuite, "that the impatient wife would meet with a furious husband, who, instead of patience, would cause her sorrow."

"And what worse could a husband do than we have just heard?" said Parlamente.

"What could he do?" rejoined Ennasuite. "Beat his wife soundly, make her sleep on the little bed, and put her he loves into the best bed."†

"I believe," said Parlamente, "it would be less painful to a right-minded woman to be beaten in a fit of passion than to be despised by a husband who was not worthy of her. After the rupture of wedded affection, the husband could do nothing which could be more painful to the wife. Accordingly, the tale states that the lady took pains to bring back the truant

* The subject of this novel is the same as that of the story of the Dame de Langalier, related by the Seigneur de Latour-Landry to his daughters, in the book he wrote for their instruction. (See Leroux de Lincy, *Femmes Célèbres de l'Ancienne France*, i. 356.)

† In France, formerly, it was customary to have in all well-furnished bedrooms two beds, a principal one, and another much smaller for the confidential servant, who always slept in his master's room. See Novel XXXIX.

only for the sake of her children—a fact I can readily believe.”

“Do you think it a great proof of patience in a woman,” said Nomerfide, “to kindle a fire on the floor of a room in which her husband is sleeping?”

“Yes,” said Longarine, “for when she saw the smoke she woke him up; and that was perhaps the greatest fault she committed, for the ashes of such husbands would be good to make lye withal.”

“You are cruel, Longarine,” said Oisille. “Yet that is not the way in which you lived with your husband.”

“No,” replied Longarine, “for, thank God, he never gave me cause; on the contrary, I must regret him as long as I live, instead of complaining of him.”

“And if he had treated you otherwise,” said Nomerfide, “what would you have done?”

“I loved him so much,” replied Longarine, “that I believe I should have killed him, and myself afterwards. After having thus avenged myself, I should have found more pleasure in dying than in living with a faithless man.”

“So far as I can see,” observed Hircan, “you love your husbands only for your own sakes. If they commit the least fault on Saturday, they lose their whole week’s labor. Do you want to be mistresses, then? For my part, I am willing to have it so, if other husbands will consent to it.”

“It is reasonable that the man should rule us,” said Parlamente; “but it is not reasonable that he should forsake and ill use us.”

“God has so wisely ordained, both for the man and for the woman,” said Oisille, “that I believe marriage, provided it be not abused, is one of the best and happiest conditions in life. I am persuaded that all present are as much impressed with that opinion as myself, or even more so, however they may affect to think otherwise. As the man esteems himself wiser than the woman, the fault will be more severely punished if it comes from him. But enough of this. Let us know on whom Dagoucín will call.”

“On Longarine,” was the reply.

“You give me great pleasure,” said Longarine; “for I have a story which is worthy to follow yours. Since we are upon

the praise of virtuous patience in ladies, I will tell you of one whose conduct was still more laudable than hers of whom you have just heard, and was the more commendable as she was a city lady, a class who are usually less trained to virtue than others."

NOVEL XXXVIII.

Remarkable charity of a lady of Tours with regard to her faithless husband.

THERE was at Tours a handsome and discreet bourgeoisie, who, for her virtues, was not only loved but feared by her husband. However, as husbands are frail, and often grow tired of always eating good bread, hers fell in love with one of his *métayères*.* He used frequently to go from Tours to visit his *métairie*, always remained there two or three days, and always came back so jaded and out of sorts, that his poor wife had trouble enough to set him up again. But no sooner was he himself once more, than back he would go to his *métairie*, where pleasure made him forget all his ailments. His wife, who loved his life and health above all things, seeing him always come back in such a bad plight, went to the *métairie*, where she found the young woman whom her husband loved, and said to her, not angrily, but in the gentlest manner possible, that she knew her husband often visited her, but was sorry she treated him so badly as invariably to send him home ill. The poor woman, constrained by respect for her mistress and by the force of truth, had not courage to deny the fact, and besought pardon. The Tourangeaude † desired to see the room and the bed in which her husband slept. The room struck her as so cold and dirty, that she was struck with pity, and sent straightway for a good bed, fine blankets, sheets, and counterpane after her husband's taste. She had the room

* *Métayère*. It was usual in France, before the Revolution, for the owner of a farm to supply the tenant with seed, etc., and to receive a proportion of the crop in lieu of rent. A farm managed on this principle was called a *métairie*, and the farmer a *métayer*, feminine, *métayère*.

† Woman of Touraine.

made clean and neat, and hung with tapestry, gave the woman a handsome service of plate, a pipe of good wine, sweetmeats, and confections, and begged her for the future not to send her husband back to her in so broken-down a condition.

It was not long before the husband went to see the *métayère* as usual; and great was his surprise to find the sorry room become so neat, but still greater was it when she gave him a silver cup to drink out of. He asked her where it came from, and the poor woman told him with tears that it was his wife who, pitying his poor entertainment, had thus furnished the house, enjoining her to be careful of his health. Struck by the great goodness of his wife, who thus returned so much good for so much evil, the gentleman reproached himself for ingratitude as great as his wife's generosity. He gave his *métayère* money, begged her thenceforth to live like an honest woman, and went back to his wife. He confessed the whole truth to her, and told her that her gentleness and goodness had withdrawn him from a bad course, from which it was impossible he should ever have escaped by any other means; and forgetting the past, they lived thenceforth together in great peace and concord.*

There are very few husbands, ladies, whom the wife does not win in the long run by patience and love, unless they are harder than the rocks which yet the weak and soft water pierces in time.

"Why, this woman had neither heart, nor gall, nor liver!" exclaimed Parlamente.

"What would you have?" said Longarine; "she did as God commands, rendering good for evil."

* This tale is related by the author of the *Ménagier de Paris*, i. 237, ed. 1847, published by the Société des Bibliophiles Français. It is the 72d of Morlini, and is in the manuscript copy of the *Varii Succedi* of Orologi, mentioned by Borromio. The French and Italian tales agree in the most minute circumstances, even in the name of the place where the lady resided. Erasmus also relates this tale in one of his colloquies, entitled *Uxor Μεμφαγαιος* sive *Conjugium*; and it occurs in Albion's England, a poem by William Warner, who was a celebrated writer in the reign of Queen Elizabeth: those stanzas which contain the incident have been extracted from that poetical epitome of English history, and published in Percy's Relics under the title of the Patient Countess.

"I fancy," said Hircan, "that she was in love with some Cordelier, who ordered her as a penance to have her husband so well treated in the country, in order that while he was there she might have leisure to treat himself well in town."

"In this you plainly show the wickedness of your own heart," said Oisille, "judging so ill of a good deed. I believe, on the contrary, that she was so penetrated by the love of God, that she cared for nothing but her husband's welfare."

"It strikes me," said Simontault, "that he had more reason to return to his wife during the time he was in such bad case at the métairie than when he was made so comfortable there."

"I see," said Saffredent, "that you are not of the same way of thinking as a rich man of Paris, who, when he lay with his wife, could not lay aside the least of his mufflings without catching cold; but when he went to see the servant girl in the cellar, without cap or shoes, in the depth of winter, he never was a bit the worse for it. Yet his wife was very handsome, and the servant very ugly."

"Have you not heard," said Geburon, "that God always helps madmen, lovers, and drunkards? Perhaps the Tourangeau was all three."

"Do you mean thence to infer," said Parlamente, "that God does nothing for the chaste, the wise, and the sober?"

"Those who can help themselves," replied Geburon, "have no need of aid. He who said, that He came for the sick and not for the hale, came by the law of His mercy to aid our infirmities, and canceled the decrees of his rigorous justice; and he who thinks himself wise is a fool in the sight of God. But to end the sermon, whom do you call upon, Longarine?"

"On Saffredent," she said.

"Then I will prove to you by an example," said he, "that God does not favor lovers. Though it has been already said, ladies, that vice is common to women and to men, yet a woman will invent a cunning artifice more promptly and more adroitly than a man. Here is an example of the fact."

NOVEL XXXIX.

Secret for driving away the Hobgoblin.

A LORD of Grignaux, gentleman of honor to Anne, Duchess of Brittany and Queen of France, returning home after an absence of more than two years, found his wife at another estate he had, not far from that in which he usually resided. He asked the reason of this, and was told that the house was haunted by a spirit which made such a disturbance that no one could live in it. Monsieur de Grignaux, who was not a man to give credit to these fancies, replied that if it was the devil himself he should not fear him, and took his wife home with him to their usual abode. At night he had plenty of torches lighted, the better to see this spirit ; but, after watching a long time without seeing or hearing anything, he at last fell asleep. No sooner had he done so than he was awakened by a sound box on the ears, after which he heard a voice crying, " Brenigne, Brenigne," which was the name of his deceased grandmother. He called to a woman who slept in the chamber to light a candle, for he had had all the torches put out, but she durst not rise. At the same time, Monsieur de Grignaux felt his bed-clothes pulled off, and heard a great noise of tables, trestles, and stools tumbled about the room with a din that lasted until day. But he never believed that it was a spirit ; he was not so frightened as vexed at losing his night's rest.

On the following night, being resolved to catch Master Goblin, he had no sooner lain down, than he pretended to snore with all his might, keeping his open hand over his face. While thus awaiting the arrival of the spirit, he heard something approach, and began to snore louder than ever. The spirit, which by this time had become familiar, gave him a great thump, whereupon Monsieur de Grignaux seized its hand, crying out, " Wife, I have caught the spirit." His wife rose instantly, lighted a candle, and behold you, it turned out that the spirit was the girl who slept in their chamber. She threw herself at their feet, begging to be forgiven, and promised to tell them the truth, which was, that the love she long entertained for a domestic had made her play this trick in order to drive the mas-

ter and mistress out of the house, and that they two who had charge of it might make good cheer, which they failed not to do when they were alone. Monsieur de Grignaux, who was not a man to be trifled with, had them both beaten in a manner they never forgot, and then turned them both out of doors. In this way he got rid of the spirits who had haunted his house for two years.

Love, ladies, works wonders. It makes women lose all fear, and torment men to arrive at their ends. Condemning the wickedness of the servant, we must equally applaud the good sense of the master, who knew that the departed spirit does not return.

"Decidedly," said Geburon, "the valet and the wench were not then favored by love. I agree with you, however, that the master had need of much good sense."

"The girl, however," said Ennasuite, "lived for a long while to her heart's content, by means of her stratagem."

"That is a very wretched content," said Oisille, "which begins with sin, and ends with shame and punishment."

"That is true," rejoined Ennasuite; "but there are many persons who suffer whilst living righteously, and who have not the wit to give themselves in the course of their lives as much pleasure as the pair in question."

"I firmly believe," replied Oisille, "that there is no perfect pleasure unless the conscience is at rest."

"The Italian maintains," said Simontault, "that the greater the sin the greater the pleasure."

"One must be a perfect devil to entertain such a thought," said Oisille; "but let us drop the subject, and see to whom Saffredent will give his voice."

"No one remains to speak but Parlamente," said Saffredent; "but though there were a hundred others, she should have my voice, as a person from whom we are sure to learn something."

"Since I am to finish the day," said Parlamente, "and promised yesterday to tell you why Rolandine's father had the castle built in which he kept her so long a prisoner, I will now fulfil my word."

NOVEL XL.

The Count de Jossebelin has his brother-in-law put to death, not knowing the relationship.

THE Count de Jossebelin, father of Rolandine, had several sisters. Some made wealthy marriages, others became nuns, and one, who was incomparably handsomer than the rest, remained in his house unmarried. The brother was so fond of this sister, that he preferred neither his wife nor his children to her; and though she had many eligible offers of marriage, they were all rejected, from his fear of losing her, and being obliged to pay down money. Consequently she remained a great part of her life unmarried, living with strict propriety in her brother's house. There was a young and handsome gentleman who had been reared in the house, and who as he grew in age grew also in personal and mental endowments, to that degree that he completely governed his master. When the latter had any message to send his sister, he always made this young gentleman the bearer of it; and as this took place morning and evening, it led to such a familiarity as presently ripened into love. The young gentleman durst not for his life offend his master; the demoiselle was not without scruples of honor; and so they had no other fruition of their love than in conversing together, until the brother had said again and again to the lover, that he wished he was of as good family as his sister, for he had never seen a man he would rather have for a brother-in-law. This was repeated so often, that after consulting together the lovers came to the conclusion that if they married secretly they should easily be forgiven. Love, which makes people readily believe what they desire, persuaded them that no bad consequences would ensue for them; and with that hope they married, unknown to any one except a priest and some women.

After having for some years enjoyed the pleasure which two handsome persons who passionately love each other can reciprocally bestow, fortune, jealous of their happiness, roused up an enemy against them, who, observing the demoiselle, became aware of her secret delights, being yet ignorant of her marriage. This person went and told the brother that the gentleman in

whom he had such confidence visited his sister too often, and at hours when a man ought never to enter her chamber. At first he could not believe this, such was his trust in his sister and the gentleman. But, as he loved his house's honor, he caused them to be observed so closely, and set so many people on the watch, that the poor innocent couple were at last surprised.

One evening, word being brought the brother that the gentleman was with his sister, he went straightway to her chamber, and found them in bed together. Choking with rage and unable to speak, he drew his sword, and ran after the gentleman to kill him; but the latter being very nimble, evaded him; and, as he could not escape by the door, he jumped out of a window that looked upon the garden. The poor lady threw herself in her shift on her knees before her brother, crying, "Spare my husband's life, monsieur, for I have married him, and if he has offended you, let me alone suffer the punishment, for he has done nothing but at my solicitation."

"Were he a thousand times your husband," replied the incensed brother, "I will punish him as a domestic who has deceived me." So saying, he went to the window, and called out to his people to kill him, which was forthwith done before his eye and those of his sister.

At this sad spectacle, which her prayers and supplications had been unable to prevent, the poor wife was like one distracted. "Brother," she said, "I have neither father nor mother, and I am of an age to marry as I choose. I chose a man whom you told me repeatedly that you would have liked me to marry. And because I did so, as by law I had a right to do without your interference, you put to death the man you loved best in the world. Since my prayers have not availed to save him, I conjure you by all the affection you have ever had for me to make me the companion of his death as I have been of all his fortunes. Thereby you will glut your cruel and unjust wrath, and give repose to the body and soul of a wife who will not and cannot live without her husband."

Though the brother was beside himself with passion, he had so much pity on his sister, that, without saying yes or no, he left her and withdrew. After having carefully investigated the matter, and ascertained that the murdered man had been wed-

ded to his sister, he would have been glad if the deed had not been done. Being afraid, however, that his sister, to revenge it, would appeal to justice, he had a castle built in the midst of a forest, and there he confined her, with orders that no one should be admitted to speak to her.

Some time after, to satisfy his conscience, he tried to conciliate her, and caused her to be sounded upon the subject of marriage; but she sent him word that he had given her such a bad dinner she had no mind to be regaled with the same dish for supper; that she hoped to live in such wise that he should never have the pleasure of killing a second husband of hers; and that after dealing so villainously with the man he loved best in the world, she could not imagine that he would pardon another. She added, that notwithstanding her weakness and impotence, she trusted that He who was a just judge and would not suffer wrong to go unpunished, would do her the grace to avenge her, and let her finish her days in her hermitage in meditating on the love and charity of her God. And this she did. She lived in that place with so much patience and austerity, that after her death every one visited her remains as those of a saint. From the moment of her death her brother's house began to fall into decay, so that of six sons not one remained to continue it. They all died miserably; and in the end Rolandine, his daughter, remained sole heiress of all, as you have been told in another tale, and succeeded to her aunt's prison.*

I wish, ladies, that you may profit by this example, and that none of you may think of marrying for your own pleasure, without the consent of those to whom you owe obedience. Marriage is an affair of such long duration, that one cannot engage in it with too much deliberation; and deliberate ever

* Josselin, a little town of Le Morbihan, was included in the domains of the Viscount of Rohan, whose name the Queen of Navarre disguises by calling him Count of *Jossebelin*. Jean II., Viscount of Rohan, had one uterine sister, named Catherine, and several half sisters. Catherine de Rohan, who is said by the authors of *Histoire Généalogique de la Maison de France*, iv. 57, to have died unmarried, is the heroine of this novel, and the murder of the Count of Keradreux, for which the Viscount of Rohan was imprisoned, is no doubt the one of which the Queen of Navarre speaks.

so well and so sagely, yet one is sure to find in it at least as much pain as pleasure.

"Were there no God or law to teach maidens discretion," said Oisille, "the example might suffice to make them have more respect for their relations than to marry without their knowledge."

"Nevertheless, madam," replied Nomerfide, "when one has one good day in the year, one is not wholly unfortunate. She had the pleasure of seeing and conversing for a long time with him whom she loved better than herself. Besides, she enjoyed it through marriage without scruple of conscience. I regard this satisfaction as so great, that, to my thinking, it fairly counterbalanced the grief that subsequently befel her."

"You mean to say, then," said Saffredent, "that the pleasure of bedding with a husband is more to a woman than the pain of seeing him killed before her eyes."

"No such thing," said Nomerfide; "were I to say so, I should speak contrary to my own experience of women. What I mean is, that an unaccustomed pleasure like that of marrying the man one loves best must be greater than the pain of losing him by death, which is an ordinary occurrence."

"That may be true of natural death," said Geburon; "but the one in question was too cruel. I think it very strange that this lord, who was neither her father nor her husband, but only her brother, should have dared to commit such a cruel deed, seeing even that his sister was of an age at which the laws allow girls to marry as they think fit."

"For my part, I see nothing strange in that," said Hircan. "He did not kill his sister whom he loved so fondly, and over whom he had no jurisdiction; but he dealt as he deserved with the young gentleman, whom he had brought up as his son and loved as his brother. He had advanced and enriched him in his service, and then, by way of gratitude, the young gentleman married his sister, which he ought not to have done."

"Again," resumed Nomerfide, "it was no common and ordinary pleasure for a lady of such high family to marry a gentleman domestic. Thus, if the death was a surprise, the pleasure also was novel, and the greater as it was contrary to

the opinion of all the wise, and was helped by the satisfaction of a heart filled with love, and by repose of soul, seeing that God was not offended. As to the death you call cruel, it seems to me that death being necessary, the quicker it is the better ; for do we not know that death is a passage which must inevitably be crossed? I regard as fortunate those who do not linger long in the outskirts of death, and who by good luck, which alone deserves that name, pass at one bound into everlasting felicity."

"What do you call the outskirts of death?" said Simontault.

"Sorrows, afflictions, long maladies," replied Nomerfide. "Those who have to sustain such extreme pangs of body or of mind that they come to despise death and complain of its too tardy approach, are in the outskirts of death, and they will tell you how the inns are named in which they have sighed more than reposed. The lady in question could not help losing her husband by death ; but her brother's anger saved her from the pain of seeing him for a long time an invalid or ill-tempered, and she could deem herself happy in converting to the service of God the satisfaction and joy she had with her husband."

"Do you count for nothing the shame she underwent and the tedium of her prison?" said Longarine.

"I am persuaded," replied Nomerfide, "that when one loves well, and with a love founded on God's command, one makes no account of shame, except so far as it lessens love ; for the glory of loving well knows no shame. As for her prison, as her heart was wholly devoted to God and her husband, I imagine she hardly felt the loss of her liberty ; for where one cannot see what one loves, the greatest blessing one can have is to think of it incessantly. A prison is never narrow when the imagination can range in it as it will."

"Nothing can be truer than what Nomerfide alleges," said Simontault ; "but the madman who effected this separation ought to have deemed himself a very wretch, offending as he did God, love, and honor."

"I am astonished," said Geburon, "that there is so much diversity in the nature of women's love ; and I see plainly that those who have the most love have the most virtue ; but

those who have the least love are the virtuous in false seeming."

"It is true," said Parlamente, "that a heart that is virtuous towards God and man loves with more passion than a vicious heart, because the former is not afraid that the real nature of its sentiments should be apparent."

"I have always understood," said Simontault, "that men are not blamable for paying court to women; for God has put into the heart of man love and the boldness to sue, and into that of woman fear and the chastity to refuse. If a man has been punished for having used the power implanted in him, he has been treated with injustice."

"But was it not a monstrous inconsistency in this brother," said Longarine, "to have persisted so long in praising this young gentleman to his sister? It seems to me that it would be a great folly, not to say cruelty, in a man who had charge of a fountain to praise its water to one who gazed on it, parched with thirst, and then to kill him for offering to drink of it."

"The fire of his encomiums on the young man," said Parlamente, "unquestionably kindled the fire of love in the lady's heart; and he was wrong to put out with his sword a fire he himself had lighted by his sweet words."

"I am surprised," said Saffredent, "that it should be taken amiss that a simple gentleman, by dint of courtship alone, and not through any false pretences, should come to marry a lady of so illustrious a house, since the philosophers maintain that the least of men is worthier than the greatest and most virtuous of women."

"The reason is," said Dagoucin, "that in order to preserve the public tranquillity, regard is only had to the degree of the families, the age of the persons, and the laws, men's love and virtue being counted as nothing, in order not to confound the monarchy. Thence it comes that in the marriages which take place between equals, and in accordance with the judgment of men and of the relations, the persons are often so different in heart, temperament, and disposition, that instead of entering into an engagement which leads to salvation, they throw themselves into the confines of hell."

"Instances have also been seen," said Geburon, "of per-

sons who have married for love, with hearts, dispositions, and temperaments mutually conformable, without concerning themselves about difference of birth, and who have nevertheless repented of what they have done. In fact, a great but indiscreet love often changes into jealousy and fury."

"To me it seems," said Parlamente, "that neither the one course nor the other is commendable, and that those persons who submit to the will of God, regard neither glory, nor avarice, nor voluptuousness. They alone are to be commended, who, actuated by virtuous love, sanctioned by the consent of their relations, desire to live in the married state as God and nature ordain. Though there is no condition without its troubles, I have yet seen these latter run their course without repenting that they had entered upon it. The present company is not so unhappy as not to number in it married persons of this class."

Thereupon Hircan, Geburon, Simontault, and Saffredent vowed that they had all married in that very spirit, and that accordingly they had never repented of the act. Whether that was true or not, the ladies whom it concerned were nevertheless so pleased with the declaration, that, being of opinion they could hear nothing better than it, they rose to go and give thanks for it to God, and found that the monks were ready for the vesper service. Their devotions ended, they supped, but not without reverting to the subject of marriage, every one recounting his own experience whilst wooing his wife. But as they interrupted each other, it was not possible to make a full record of their several stories; which was a pity, for they were not less agreeable than those they had recounted in the meadow. This conversation was so interesting, that bedtime arrived before they were aware of it. Madame Oisille was the first to perceive that it was time to retire, and her example was followed by the rest. All went to bed in the gayest humor, and I do not think the married couples slept more than the others, but spent a part of the night in talking over their affections in times past, and giving each other evidences of its present existence. Thus the night passed agreeably away.

FIFTH DAY.

*On the Fifth Day Tales are told of the virtue of those
maids and matrons who hold their honour in
more consideration than their pleasure,
also of those who did the contrary,
and of the simplicity of
certain others.*

FIFTH DAY.

WHEN day dawned, Madame Oisille prepared for them a spiritual breakfast of such good savor, that it fortified their minds and bodies alike ; and the company were so attentive to it, that it seemed they had never heard a sermon to more advantage. The second bell for mass having rung, they went to meditate on the good things they had heard. After mass they took a little walk while waiting for dinner, anticipating as agreeable a day as the preceding one. Saffredent said that he was so charmed with the good cheer they made and the recreation they enjoyed, that he could wish it might be a month yet before the bridge was finished ; but as it was no comfort to the abbot to live along with so many respectable people, into whose presence he durst not bring his usual female pilgrims, he urged the workmen to make all possible speed. When the company had rested awhile after dinner, they returned to their usual pastime, and every one being seated, they asked Parlemeute who should begin. "It strikes me," she said, "that Saffredent would do so very well, for his face does not seem to me adapted to make us cry."

"Nay, ladies, you will be very cruel," he replied, "if you bestow no pity upon a Cordelier whose story I am going to relate to you. You will say, perhaps, as has been already remarked of other incidents of this kind, that they are things which have happened to ladies, and would not have been attempted but for the facility of their execution ; but that is not the case : on the contrary, you shall see from the example I am about to adduce, that the Cordeliers are so blind in their lust, that they know neither fear nor prudence."

NOVEL XLI.

Strange and novel Penance imposed by a Cordelier Confessor on a young lady.

IN the year when Margaret of Austria came to Cambrai on the part of the emperor her nephew to negotiate the peace between him and the Most Christian King, who sent on his

part Louise of Savoy his mother, there was in the suite of Margaret of Austria the Countess of Aiguemont, who passed in that assembly for the most beautiful of the Flemish ladies. After the conference the Countess of Aiguemont returned home, and the season of Advent being come, she sent to a monastery of Cordeliers, requiring a preacher, a good man, fit to preach to and confess the countess and her household. The warden, who received great benefits from the house of Aiguemont, and from that of Fiennes, to which the countess belonged, sent the best preacher in the society, and the one who was regarded as the most upright man. He performed his duty very well in preaching the Advent sermons, and the countess was perfectly satisfied with him.

On Christmas night, when the countess intended to receive her Creator, she sent for her confessor, and after having well and duly confessed in a chapel carefully closed that the confession might be more secret, she gave place to her lady of honor, who, having made her confession, next sent her daughter. After the young penitent had told all she knew, the good confessor knew something of her secrets, which prompted him to impose upon her an extraordinary penance, and he was bold enough to say to her, "Your sins, my daughter, are so great, that I order you, for penance, to wear my cord on your bare flesh."

The demoiselle, who had no wish to disobey him, replied, "Give it me, father, and I will not fail to wear it."

"No, daughter," replied the holy man, "it would not be meet for you to fasten it on. That must be done by these very hands from which you are to receive absolution, and afterwards you will be absolved from all your sins."

The demoiselle began to cry, and said she would do no such thing. "What!" exclaimed the confessor, "are you a heretic, to refuse the penances which God and our holy Mother Church have ordained?"

"I make of confession the use which the Church has commanded," replied the demoiselle. "I am quite willing to receive absolution, and to do penance; but I will not have you put your hands to it; for in that case, I refuse to submit to your penance."

"That being the case," said the confessor, "I cannot give you absolution."

The demoiselle withdrew, sorely troubled in conscience, for she was so young that she was afraid she had transgressed by the refusal she had given to the reverend father. After mass was over, and the Countess of Aiguemont had taken the communion, her lady of honor, intending to do the same, asked her daughter if she was ready. The girl replied, with tears, that she had not yet confessed. "Then, what have you been doing so long with the preacher?" inquired her mother.

"Nothing," replied the daughter; "for, as I would not submit to the penance he ordered me, he would not grant me absolution."

Thereupon the mother questioned her so shrewdly, that she learned the nature of the extraordinary penance which the monk wished to impose upon her daughter. She made her confess to another, and afterwards they both communicated.

As soon as the countess returned from church, the lady of honor complained to her of the preacher, to the countess's great surprise, for she had a very good opinion of him. All her anger, however, did not hinder her from laughing at the oddity of the penance; but neither did her laughter hinder her from having the good father chastised. He was handsomely thrashed in the kitchen, and so compelled, by dint of blows, to confess the truth; after which, he was sent away, bound hand and foot, to his warden, with a request that another time he would commission better men to preach the Word of God.

Consider, ladies, if the monks do not scruple to display their wickedness in so illustrious a house, what are they not capable of doing in the poor places to which they commonly go to make their gatherings, and where they have such full opportunities that it is a miracle if they quit them without scandal? This obliges me to entreat, ladies, that you will change your scorn into compassion, and consider that the power which can blind the Cordeliers does not spare the ladies, when he finds them a fair mark for his shafts.

"Assuredly, this was a wicked Cordelier," said Oisille. "A monk, a priest, and a preacher, to be guilty, on Christmas-day, of such an infamy, and that in the house of God, and under the sacred veil of confession! This was carrying impiety and villany to the very climax."

"Why," said Hircan, "to hear you talk, one would think the Cordeliers should be angels, or more chaste than other men; but they are quite the reverse, as you must know from many an example. As for this one, it appears to me that he was very excusable, finding himself, as he did, shut up alone with a handsome girl."

"Nay," said Oisille, "but it was Christmas night."

"The very thing that makes him the more excusable," said Simontault, "for, being in Joseph's place, beside a beautiful virgin, he had a mind to try and beget a baby, in order to play the mystery of the Nativity to the life."

"Truly," said Parlamente, "if he had thought of Joseph and the Virgin Mary, he would not have harbored such a wicked purpose. At any rate, he was an audacious villain to make such a criminal attempt upon no encouragement."

"The manner in which the countess had him castigated," said Oisille, "might serve, methinks, as a warning to others like him."

"I do not know if she did well," said Nomerfide, "thus to scandalize her neighbor, and if it would not have been better to remonstrate with him on his fault in private and gently, than thus to divulge it."

"That I think would have been better," said Geburon, "for we are commanded to reprove our neighbor in secret, before we speak of his offence, not only to the Church, but to any person whatever. When a man is deprived of all motives on the side of honor, it is very hard for him to reform; and the reason is, that shame keeps as many from sin as does conscience."

"I think," said Parlamente, "that every one should practise the precepts of the Gospel, and it is very scandalous that those who preach them should do the reverse; therefore, we need have no fear of scandalizing those who scandalize others. On the contrary, it appears to me meritorious to make them known for what they are, so that we may be on our guard against their wiles with regard to the fair sex, who are not always wary and prudent. But to whom does Hircan give his voice?"

"Since you ask me," he replied, "I give it to you, to whom no sensible man could refuse it."

“Well then,” rejoined Parlamente, “I will tell you a story to which I can testify of my own knowledge. I have always heard that the weaker the vessel in which virtue abides, and the more violently it is assaulted by a powerful and formidable antagonist, the more worthy is it of praise, and the more conspicuously is its nature displayed. That the strong defends himself against the strong is no matter for wonder; but to see the weak beat the strong is a thing to be extolled by all the world. Knowing the persons of whom I mean to speak, methinks it would be wronging the truth I have seen hid under so mean a garb that no one made any account of it, if I did not speak of her by whom were done the honorable actions of which I am about to tell you.”

NOVEL XLII.

Chaste perseverance of a Maiden, who resisted the obstinate pursuit of one of the greatest lords in France—Agreeable issue of the affair for the Demoiselle.

IN one of the best towns of Touraine lived a lord of great and illustrious family, who had been brought up from his youth in the province. All I need say of the perfections, beauty, grace, and great qualities of this young prince is, that in his time he never had his equal. At the age of fifteen, he took more pleasure in hunting and hawking than in beholding fair ladies. Being one day in a church, he cast his eyes on a young girl who, during her childhood, had been brought up in the château in which he resided. After the death of her mother, her father had withdrawn thence, and gone to reside with his brother in Poitou. This daughter of his, whose name was Françoise, had a bastard sister, whom her father was very fond of, and had married to this young prince's butler, who maintained her on as handsome a footing as any of her family. The father died, and left to Françoise for her portion all he possessed about the good town in question, whither she went to reside after his death; but as she was unmarried and only

sixteen, she would not keep house, but went to board with her sister.

The young prince was much struck with this girl, who was very handsome for a light brunette, and of a grace beyond her rank; for she had the air of a young lady of quality, or of a princess, rather than of a bourgeoisie. He gazed upon her for a long while; and as he had never loved, he felt in his heart a pleasure that was new to him. On returning to his chamber, he made inquiries about the girl he had seen at church, and recollected that formerly, when she was very young, she used often to play in the château with his sister, whom he put in mind of her. His sister sent for her, gave her a very good reception, and begged her to come often to see her, which she did whenever there was any entertainment or assembly. The young prince was very glad to see her, and so glad that he chose to be deeply in love with her. Knowing that she was of low birth, he thought he should easily obtain of her what he sought; and, as he had no opportunity to speak with her, he sent a gentleman of his chamber to her, with orders to acquaint her with his intentions, and settle matters with her. The girl, who was good and pious, replied that she did not believe that so handsome a prince as his master would care to look upon a plain girl like herself, especially as there were such handsome ones in the château that he had no need to look elsewhere; and that she doubted not he had said all this to her out of his own head and without orders from his master.

As obstacles make desire more violent, the prince now became more hotly intent on his purpose than ever, and wrote to her, begging her to believe everything the gentleman should say to her on his part. She could read and write very well, and she read the letter from beginning to end; but for no entreaties the gentleman could make would she ever reply to it, saying that a person of her humble birth should never take the liberty to write to so great a prince; but that she begged he would not take her for such a fool as to imagine that he esteemed her enough to love her as much as he said. Moreover, he was mistaken if he fancied that because she was of obscure birth, he might do as he pleased with her, and that to convince him of the contrary, she felt obliged to declare to him that, bourgeoisie as she was, there was no princess whose

heart was more upright than hers. There were no treasures in the world she esteemed so much as honor and conscience. And the only favor she begged of him was, that he would not hinder her from preserving that treasure all her life long, and that he might take it for certain that she would never change her mind though it were to cost her her life.

The young prince did not find this answer to his liking. Nevertheless, he loved her but the more for it, and failed not to lay siege to her when she went to mass; and during the whole service he had no eyes but to gaze on that image to which he addressed his devotions. But when she perceived this, she changed her place and went to another chapel, not that she disliked to see him, for she would not have been a reasonable creature if she had not taken pleasure in looking on him; but she was afraid of being seen by him, not thinking highly enough of herself to deserve being loved with a view to marriage, and being too high-minded to be able to accommodate herself to a dishonorable love. When she saw that in whatever part of the church she placed herself, the prince had mass said quite near it, she went no more to that church, but to the most distant one she could find. Moreover, when the prince's sister often sent for her, she always excused herself on the plea of indisposition.

The prince, seeing he could not have access to her, had recourse to his butler, and promised him a large reward if he served him in this affair. The butler, both to please his master and for the hope of lucre, promised to do so cheerfully. He made it a practise to relate daily to the prince all she said and did, and assured him, among other things, that she avoided as much as possible all opportunities of seeing him. The prince's violent desire for an interview with her, set him upon devising another expedient. As he was already beginning to be a very good horseman, he bethought him of going to ride his great horses in a large open place of the town, exactly opposite to the house of the butler, in which Françoise resided. One day, after many courses and leaps, which she could see from her chamber window, he let himself fall off his horse into a great puddle. Though he was not hurt, he took care to make great moans, and asked if there was no house into which he might go and change his clothes. Every one offered him his

own ; but some one having remarked that the butler's was the nearest and the best, it was chosen in preference to any of the others. He was shown into a well-furnished chamber, and as his clothes were all muddy, he stripped to his shirt and went to bed. Every one except his gentleman having gone away to fetch other clothes for the prince, he sent for his host and hostess, and asked them where was Françoise ? They had a good deal of trouble to find her, for as soon as she had seen the prince come in, she had gone and hid herself in the remotest corner of the house. Her sister found her at last, and begged her not to be afraid to come and see so polite and worthy a prince.

"What ! sister," said Françoise, "you, whom I regard as my mother, would you persuade me to speak to a young prince of whose intentions I cannot be ignorant, as you well know?"

But her sister used so many arguments, and promised so earnestly not to leave her alone, that Françoise went with her, with a countenance so pale and dejected, that she was an object rather to inspire pity than love. When the young prince saw her at his bedside, he took her cold and trembling hand, and said, "Why, Françoise, do you think me such a dangerous and cruel man that I eat the women I look at ? Why do you so much fear a man who desires only your honor and advantage ? You know that I have everywhere sought in vain for opportunities to see and speak to you. To grieve me the more, you have shunned the places where I had been used to see you at mass, and thereby you have deprived me of the satisfaction of my eyes and my tongue. But all this has availed you nothing. I have done what you have seen in order to come hither, and have run the risk of breaking my neck in order to have the pleasure of speaking to you without restraint. I entreat you then, Françoise, since it would be hard for me to have taken all this pains to no purpose, that as I have so much love for you, you will have a little for me."

After waiting a long while for her reply, and seeing she had tears in her eyes, and durst not look up, he drew her towards him and almost succeeded in kissing her. "No, my lord, no," she then said, "what you ask cannot be. Though I am but a worm in comparison with you, honor is so dear to me that I would rather die than wound it in the least degree for any

pleasure in the world ; and my fear, lest those who have seen you come in conceive a false opinion of me, makes me tremble as you see. Since you are pleased to do me the honor to address me, you will also pardon the liberty I take in replying to you as honor prescribes. I am not, my lord, so foolish or so blind as not to see and know the advantages with which God has endowed you, and to believe that she who shall possess the heart and person of such a prince will be the happiest woman in the world. But what good does that do me? That happiness is not for me or for any woman of my rank ; and I should be a downright simpleton if I even entertained the desire. What reason can I believe you have for addressing yourself to me, but that the ladies of your house, whom you love, and who have so much grace and beauty, are so virtuous that you dare not ask of them what the lowness of my condition makes you easily expect of me ; I am sure that if you had of such as me what you desire, that weakness would supply you with matter to entertain your mistresses for two good hours ; but I beg you to believe, my lord, that I am not disposed to afford you that pleasure. I was brought up in a house in which I learned what it is to love. My father and mother were among your good servants. Since then it has not pleased God that I should be born a princess to marry you, or in a rank sufficiently high to be your friend, I entreat you not to think of reducing me to the rank of the unfortunates of my sex, since there is no one who esteems you more than I, or more earnestly desires that you may be one of the happiest princes in Christendom. If you want women of my station for your diversion, you will find plenty in this town incomparably handsomer than myself, and who will spare you the trouble of soliciting them so much. Attach yourself, then, if you please, to those who will gladly let you buy their honor, and harass no longer a poor girl who loves you better than herself ; for if God were this day to require your life or mine, it would be a happiness to me to sacrifice mine in order to save yours. If I shun your person, it is not for want of love, but rather because I too well love your conscience and mine, and because my honor is more precious to me than my life. I ask you, my lord, if you please, to continue to honor me with your good-will, and I will pray to God all my life for your

health and prosperity. It is true that the honor you do me will give me a better opinion of myself among persons of my own station; for after having seen you, where is the man of my own condition whom I would deign to regard? Thus my heart will be free and under no obligation, except that which I shall ever acknowledge, to pray to God for you, which is all I can do for you while I live."

Contrary as this reply was to the prince's desires, nevertheless he could not help esteeming her as she deserved. He did all he could to make her believe he would never love any one but herself; but she had so much sense that he never could bring her to entertain so unreasonable a notion. Though, during the course of this conversation, it was often intimated to the prince that fresh clothes had been brought him, he was so glad to remain where he was that he sent back word he was asleep. But at last, supper-time being come, and not daring to absent himself from respect for his mother, who was one of the most correct ladies in the world, he went away, more impressed than ever with the excellence of Françoise. He often talked of her to the gentleman who slept in his chamber. That person, imagining that money would be more effectual than love, advised him to present a considerable sum to the girl in consideration of the favor he solicited. As the young prince's mother was his treasurer, and his pocket money was not much, he borrowed, and out of his own funds and those of his friends he made up a sum of five hundred crowns, which he sent to Françoise by his gentleman, commissioning him to beg that she would change her mind.

"Tell your master," she said, when the gentleman offered her the present, "that my heart is so noble and generous, that were it my humor to do what he desires, his good looks and his pleasing qualities would have already made a conquest of me; but since these are incapable of making me take the slightest step at variance with honor, all the money in the world could not do it. You will take back his money to him, if you please, for I prefer honest poverty to all the wealth he could bestow upon me."

Baffled by this downright refusal, the gentleman was tempted to think that a little violence might succeed, and he dropped threatening hints of her master's influence and power. "Make

a bugbear of the prince," she said, laughing in his face, "to those who do not know him; but I, who know him to be wise and virtuous, can never believe that you say this by his order; and I am persuaded that he will disavow it all if you repeat it to him. But even were it true that you had his authority for what you say, I tell you that neither torments nor death could ever shake my resolution, for, as I have said before, since love has not changed my heart, no earthly good or evil can ever effect what that has failed to accomplish."

It was with indescribable vexation that the gentleman, who had undertaken to humanize her, carried back this answer to his master, whom he urged to carry his point by all possible means, representing to him that it would be shameful for him to have undertaken such a conquest and not achieve it. The young prince, who wished to employ only fair means, and who was afraid, besides, of his mother's anger if the story got abroad and reached her ears, durst not take any further step, until at last the gentleman suggested to him an expedient, which seemed to him so good, that he felt already as if the fair one was his own. To this end he spoke to the butler, who, being ready to serve his master on any terms, consented to everything required of him. It was arranged, then, that the butler should invite his wife and his sister-in-law to go to see their vintage at a house he had near the forest; he did so, and they agreed to the proposal. The appointed day being come, he gave notice to the prince, who was to go to the same place, accompanied only by his gentleman. But it pleased God that his mother was that day adorning a most beautiful cabinet, and had all her children to help her; so that the proper time passed by before the prince could get away. This was no fault of the butler's, who had fully performed his part; for he made his wife counterfeit illness, and when he was on horseback with his sister-in-law on the croup, she came and told him that she could not go. But the hour having passed by and no prince appearing, "I believe," said he to his sister-in-law, "we may as well go back to town."

"Who hinders us?" said Françoise.

"I was waiting for the prince, who had promised to come," said the butler.

His sister, clearly discerning his wicked purpose, replied,

"Wait no longer for him, brother ; for I know that he will not come to-day."

He acquiesced, and took her home again. On arriving there she let him know her dissatisfaction, and told him plainly that he was the devil's valet, and did more than he was commanded ; for she was very sure that it was his work and the gentleman's, not the prince's ; that they both liked better to flatter his weaknesses, and gain money, than to do their duty as good servants ; but that since she knew this she would no longer remain in his house. Thereupon she sent for her brother to take her away to his own country, and immediately quitted her sister's house.

The butler having missed his blow, went to the château to know why the prince had not come, and met him on the way, mounted on his mule, with no other attendant than his confidential gentleman.

"Well," said the prince, the moment he saw him, "is she still there?"

The butler told him what had happened, and the prince was greatly vexed at having missed the rendezvous, which he regarded as his last hope. However, he took such pains to meet Françoise, that at last he fell in with her in a company from which she could not escape, and upbraided her strongly for her cruelty to him, and for quitting her brother-in-law's house. Françoise told him she had never known a more dangerous man, and that he, the prince, was under great obligations to him, since he employed in his service not only his body and his substance, but also his soul and his conscience. The prince could not help feeling that there was no hope for him ; he therefore resolved to press her no more, and he continued all his life to entertain a great esteem for her. One of his domestics, charmed by her virtue, wished to marry her ; but she could never bring herself to consent without the approbation and command of the prince, on whom she had set her whole affection. She had him spoken to on the subject ; he consented to the marriage, and it took place. She lived all her life in good repute, and the prince did her much kindness.*

* The young lord spoken of in this novel is evidently Francis I ; and the town of Touraine is Amboise, where Louise of Savoy resided with her children.

What shall we say, ladies? Are we so low-spirited as to make our servants our masters? She whose story I have related to you was not to be overcome either by love or by importunity. Let us imitate her example and be victorious over ourselves. Nothing is more praiseworthy than to subdue one's passions."

"I see but one thing to regret in this case," said Oisille, "which is, that actions so virtuous did not take place in the time of the historians. Those who have so lauded Lucretia would have left her story to relate the virtues of this heroine. They seem to me so great, that I could hardly believe them had we not sworn to speak the truth."

"Her virtue does not seem to me so great as you make it out to be," said Hircan. "You must have seen plenty of squeamish invalids, who left good and wholesome food for what was bad and unwholesome. Perhaps this girl loved some one else, for whose sake she despised persons of the first order."

To that Parlamente replied, that the life and end of this girl showed that "she had never loved but him whom she loved above her life, but not above her honor."

"Put that out of your head," said Saffredent, "and learn what was the origin of that phrase *honor*, which prudes make such a fuss about. Perhaps those who talk so much about it do not know what it means. In the time when men were not over-crafty—the golden age, if you will—love was so frank, simple, and strong, that no one knew what it was to dissemble, and he who loved most was the most esteemed. But malignity, avarice, and sin, having taken possession of men's hearts, drove out from them God and love, and put there, instead of them, self-love, hypocrisy, and feigning. The ladies seeing that they had not the virtue of true and genuine love, and that hypocrisy was very odious amongst mankind, gave it the name of honor. Those, then, who could not compass that true love, said that they were forbidden by honor. This practice they have erected into so cruel a law, that even those of their sex who love perfectly, dissemble, and think that this virtue is a vice; but such of them as have good sense and sound judgment never fall into this error. They know the difference between darkness and light; and know that genuine love consists in manifesting chastity of heart, which lives upon

love alone, and does not pride itself on dissimulation, which is a vice."

"Yet it is said," observed Dagoucin, "that the most secret love is the most commendable."

"Secret," replied Simontault, "for those who might misjudge it, but clear and avowed at least for the two persons concerned."

"So I understand it," said Dagoucin. "Nevertheless, it were better it were unknown by one of the two, than known to a third. I believe that the subject of the tale loved the more strongly that she did not declare her love."

"Be this as it may," said Longarine, "virtue is to be esteemed; and the highest virtue is to overcome one's own heart. When I consider the means and opportunities she had, I maintain that she was entitled to be called a heroine."

"Since you make self-mortification the measure of virtue," said Saffredent, "the prince deserved more praise than she did. To be convinced of this, one has only to consider his passion for her, his power, his opportunities, and the means he might have employed, yet would not, that he might not violate the rule of perfect affection, which makes the indigent equal to the prince, but contented himself with employing the means which fair dealing permits."

"There is many a one who would not have done that," said Hircan.

"He is the more to be esteemed," replied Longarine, "because he overcame the evil disposition common to men. Blessed, unquestionably, is he who has it in his power to do evil, yet does it not."

"You put me in mind," said Geburon, "of a woman who was more afraid of offending men than God, her honor, and love."

"Pray tell us the story," said Parlamente.

"There are people," he continued, "who own no God, or who, if they believe there is one, think him so remote, that He can neither see nor know the bad acts they commit; or if He does, they suppose Him to be so careless and indifferent to what is done here below, that He will not punish them. Of this way of thinking was a lady, whose name I shall conceal for the honor of her race, and call her Jambicque. She used

often to say that to care only for God was all very well, but the main point with her was to preserve her honor before men. But you will see, ladies, that her prudence and her hypocrisy did not save her. Her secret was revealed, as you shall find from her story, in which I will state nothing but what is true, except the names of the persons and the places, which I will change."

NOVEL XLIII.

Hypocrisy of a Court Lady discovered by the dénouement of her amours, which she wished to conceal.

A PRINCESS of great eminence lived in a very handsome château, and had with her a lady named Jambicque, of a haughty and audacious spirit, who was, nevertheless, such a favorite with her mistress, that she did nothing but by her advice, believing her to be the most discreet and virtuous lady of her time. This Jambicque used to inveigh loudly against illicit love; and if ever she saw that any gentleman was enamored with one of her companions, she used to reprimand the pair with great bitterness, and tell a very bad tale of them to her mistress, so that she was much more feared than loved. As for her, she never spoke to a man except aloud, and with so much haughtiness, that she was universally regarded as an inveterate foe to love; but, in her heart, she was quite otherwise. In fact, there was a gentleman in her mistress's service with whom she was as much in love as a woman could be; but so dear to her was her good name, and the reputation she had made herself, that she entirely dissembled her passion.

After suffering for a year, without choosing to solace herself, like other women, by means of her eyes and her tongue, her heart became so inflamed, that she was driven to seek the ultimate remedy; and she made up her mind that it was better to satisfy her desire, provided none but God knew her heart, than to confide it to one who might betray her secret. Having come to this resolution, one day when she was in her mistress's chamber, and was looking out on a terrace, she saw the gentleman she loved so much walking there. After gazing on him until darkness concealed him from her sight, she called

her little page, and, pointing out the gentleman to him, "Do you see," she said, "that gentleman in a crimson satin doublet, and a robe trimmed with lynx fur? Go and tell him that a friend of his wishes to see him, and is waiting for him in the gallery in the garden."

Whilst the page was doing his errand, she went out the back way, and went to the gallery, after putting on her mask and pulling down her hood. When the gentleman entered the gallery, she first fastened both the doors, so that no one should come in upon them, and then, embracing him with all her might, she said in a low whisper, "This long time, my friend, the love I have for you has made me long for place and time to speak with you; but my fear for my honor has been so great that I have been constrained, in spite of myself, to conceal my passion. But at last love has prevailed over fear; and as your honor is known to me, I declare that if you will promise to love me, and never to speak of it to any one, or inquire whom I am, I will be all my life your faithful and loving friend; and I assure you I will never love any but you; but I would rather die than tell you who I am."

The gentleman promised all she asked, and thereby encouraged her to treat him in the same way—that is to say, refuse him nothing. It was in winter, about five or six o'clock in the evening, when of course he could not see much. But if his eyes were of little service to him on the occasion, his hands were not so. Touching her clothes he found they were of velvet, a costly stuff in those times, and not worn every day, except by ladies of high family. As far as the hand could judge, all beneath was neat and in the best condition. Accordingly he tried to regale her to the best of his ability, she too performed her part equally well, and the gentleman easily perceived she was married.

When she was about to return to the place whence she came, the gentleman said to her, "Highly do I prize the favor you have conferred on me without my deserving it; but that will be still more precious to me which you will grant at my entreaty. Enchanted as I am by your gracious favor, I beg you will tell me if I am to expect a continuance of it, and in what manner I am to act; for, not knowing you, how am I to address you elsewhere to solicit the renewal of my happiness?"

"Give yourself no concern about that," replied the fair one, "but rely upon it that every evening after my mistress has supped, I shall be sure to send for you, if you are on the terrace where you were just now. But, above all things, do not forget what you have promised. When I simply send word that you are wanted, you will understand that I await you in the gallery; but if you hear speak of going to meat, you may either retire or come to our mistress's apartment. Above all, I beg you never to attempt to know who I am, unless you wish to break our friendship."

The lady and the gentleman then went their several ways. Their intrigue lasted a long while without his ever being able to know who she was, though he had a marvellous longing to satisfy his curiosity on the point. He wearied his imagination in vain to guess who she might be, and could not conceive that there was a woman in the world who did not choose to be seen and loved. As he had heard some stupid preacher say that no one who had seen the face of the devil would ever love him, he imagined that she might possibly be some evil spirit. To clear up his doubts, he resolved to know who she was who received him so graciously. The next time, therefore, that she sent for him, he took some chalk, and in the act of embracing her, marked her shoulder without her perceiving it. As soon as she had left him, he hastened to the princess's chamber, and stationed himself at the door to observe the shoulders of the ladies who entered. It was not long before he saw that same Jambicque advance to the door, with such an air of lofty disdain, that he durst not think of scrutinizing her like the others, feeling assured that she could not be the person he sought. But when her back was turned, he could not help seeing the mark of the chalk, though such was his astonishment he could hardly believe his own eyes. However, after having well considered her figure, which corresponded precisely to that he was in the habit of touching in the dark, he was convinced that it was she herself; and he was very glad to see that a woman who had never been suspected of having a gallant, and was renowned for having refused so many worthy gentlemen, had at last fixed upon him alone.

Love, who never remains in one mood, could not suffer him long to enjoy that satisfaction. The gentleman conceived

such a good opinion of his own powers of pleasing, and flattered himself with such fair hopes, that he resolved to make his love known to her, imagining that when he had done so, he should have reason to love her still more passionately. One day, when the princess was walking in the garden, the Lady Jambicque turned into an alley by herself. The gentleman, seeing her alone, went to converse with her, and feigning not to have seen her elsewhere, said to her, "I have long loved you, mademoiselle, but durst not tell you so, for fear of offending you. This constraint is so irksome to me that I must speak or die; for I do not believe that any one can love you as I do."

Here the Lady Jambicque cut him short, and looking sternly upon him, "Have you ever heard," she said, "that I had a lover? I trow not; and I am amazed at your presumption in daring to address such language to a lady of my character. You have seen enough of me here to be aware that I shall never love any one but my husband. Beware, then, how you venture again to speak to me in any such way."

Astonished at such profound hypocrisy, the gentleman could not help laughing. "You have not always been so rigid, madam," he said. "What is the use of dissembling with me? Is it not better we should love perfectly than imperfectly?"

"I neither love you perfectly nor imperfectly," replied Jambicque, "but regard you just as I do my mistress's other servants. But if you continue to speak to me in this manner, I am very likely to hate you in such sort, that you will repent of having given me provocation."

The gentleman, pushing his point, rejoined, "Where are the caresses, mademoiselle, which you bestow upon me when I cannot see you? Why deprive me of them now that day reveals your exquisite beauty to me?"

"You are out of your senses," exclaimed Jambicque, making a great sign of the cross, "or you are the greatest liar in the world; for I don't believe I ever bestowed on you more or less caresses than I do this moment. What is it you mean, pray?"

The poor gentleman, thinking to force her from her subterfuges, named the place where he had met her, and told her

of the mark he had put upon her with chalk in order to recognize her. Her exasperation was then so excessive, that instead of confessing, she told him he was the most wicked of men to have invented such an infamous lie against her, but that she would try to make him repent it. Knowing what influence she had with her mistress, he tried to appease her, but all in vain. She rushed from him in fury, and went to where her mistress was walking, who quitted the company with her to converse with Jambicque, whom she loved as herself. The princess, seeing her so agitated, asked her what was the matter? Jambicque concealed nothing, but told her all the gentleman had said, putting it in so artful a manner and so much to the poor gentleman's disadvantage, that his mistress that very evening sent him orders to go home instantly, without saying a word to any one, and to remain there until further orders. He obeyed for fear of worse. As long as Jambicque was with the princess he remained in exile, and never heard from Jambicque, who had warned him truly that he should lose her if ever he tried to know her.*

You may see, ladies, how she, who preferred the world's respect to her conscience, lost both the one and the other; for everybody now knows what she wished to conceal from her lover; and through her desire to avoid being mocked by one alone, she has now become an object of derision to all the world. It cannot be said in her excuse that hers was an ingenuous love, the simplicity of which claims every one's pity; for what makes her doubly deserving of condemnation is that her design was to cover the wickedness of her heart

* Brantôme (*Dames Galantes*, Discours ii.) gives a detailed analysis of this novel in a very lively style, and says of the too-talkative gallant, "Those who knew the temper of this gentleman will hold him excused, for he was neither cold nor discreet enough to play that game, and mask himself with that discretion. According to what I have heard from my mother, who was in the Queen of Navarre's service and knew some secrets of her novels, and was herself one of the confabulators (*devisantes*), it was my late uncle La Chastaigneraye, who was brusque, hasty, and rather volatile." This Seigneur de La Chastaigneraye is the same who fought the famous duel with the Sire de Jarnac, in which he was killed with a sword-pass known by the name of *coup de Jarnac*. Brantôme says that the lady was a *grande dame*, but he does not name her.

with the mantle of glory and honor, and pass before God and man for what she was not. But He who will not give His glory to another was pleased to unmask her, and make her appear doubly infamous.

"Truly," said Oisille, "this woman was wholly inexcusable; for who can say a word for her, since God, honor, and love are her accusers?"

"Who?" exclaimed Hircan, "why, pleasure and folly, two great advocates for the ladies."

"If we had no other advocates," said Parlamente, "our cause would be ill defended. Those who let pleasure get the better of them, ought no longer to call themselves women, but men; for the honor of that sex is not sullied but exalted by lust and concupiscence. A man who revenges himself on his enemy, and kills him for giving him the lie, passes for a brave man, and is so, indeed. It is the same thing when a man loves a dozen women besides his own wife. But the honor of women has a different foundation—that is to say, gentleness, patience, and chastity."

"You speak of the wise among them," rejoined Hircan.

"I do not choose to know any others," said Parlamente.

"If there were no foolish ones," said Nomerfide, "those who would fain be believed by everybody would prove to have been often liars."

"Pray, Nomerfide," said Geburon, "let me give you my voice, in order that you may tell us a tale to that purpose."

"Since virtue constrains me, and you make it my turn, I will tell you what I know to that effect. I have not heard any one here present fail to speak to the disadvantage of the Cordeliers, and in pity for them I propose to say some good of them in the tale you are about to hear."

NOVEL XLIV.

A Cordelier received a double alms for telling the plain truth.

A CORDELIER came to the house of Sedan to ask Madame de Sedan, who was of the house of Coucy, for a pig she used to give them every year as alms. Monseigneur de Sedan,

who was a wise and facetious man, made the good father eat at his table, and to put him on his mettle, he said to him among other things, "You do well, good father, to make your gatherings whilst you are not known, for I am greatly afraid that if once your hypocrisy is discovered, you will no longer have the bread of poor children earned by the sweat of their fathers." The Cordelier was not abashed by this remark, but replied, "My lord, our order is so well founded that it will endure as long as the world, for our foundation will never fail so long as there are men and women on earth." Monseigneur de Sedan being curious to know what was this foundation he spoke of, pressed him strongly to tell. After many attempts to excuse himself, the Cordelier said, "Know, my lord, that we are founded on the folly of women; and as long as there is a foolish woman in the world, we shall not die of hunger."

Madame de Sedan, who was very choleric, hearing this speech, flew into such a passion, that if her husband had not been there, she would have had the Cordelier roughly handled; and she swore very decidedly he should never have the pig she had promised; but Monseigneur de Sedan, seeing he had not disguised the truth, swore he should have two, and had them sent to his monastery.

Thus it was, ladies, that the Cordelier being sure that ladies' offerings could not fail him, contrived to have the favor and the alms of men for speaking the plain truth. Had he been a flatterer and dissembler, he would have been more pleasing to the ladies, but not so profitable to himself and his brethren.

The novel was not ended without making the company laugh, especially those of them who knew the lord and lady of Sedan. "The Cordeliers then," said Hircan, "ought never to preach with a view to make women wise, since their folly serves them so well."

"They do not preach to them to be wise," said Parlamente, "but only to believe themselves so; for those women who are wholly mundane and foolish, give them no great alms; but those who by reason of frequenting their monasteries, and carrying paternosters marked with a death's head, and wearing their hoods lower than others, think themselves the wisest, are

those who may well be called foolish ; for they rest their salvation on the confidence they have in those unrighteous men whom, in consideration of a little seeming, they esteem demigods."

"But who can help believing them," said Ennasuite, "seeing that they are ordained by our prelates to preach the Gospel, and reprove us for our sins?"

"Those can," replied Parlamente, "who have known their hypocrisy, and who know the difference between God's doctrine and the devil's."

"Jesus!" exclaimed Ennasuite, "can you suppose that those people would dare to preach a bad doctrine?"

"Suppose?" returned Parlamente, "nay, I am sure there is nothing they believe less than the Gospel; I mean the bad ones among them, for I know many good men who preach the Scriptures purely and simply, and live likewise without scandal, without ambition or covetousness, and in chastity that is neither feigned nor constrained. But the streets are not so full of such men as of their opposites; and the good tree is known by its fruits."

"In good faith, I thought," said Ennasuite, "that we were bound under pain of mortal sin to believe all they tell us from the pulpit of truth, when they speak only of what is in Holy Writ, or adduce the expositions of holy doctors divinely inspired."

"For my part," said Parlamente, "I cannot ignore the fact that there have been among them men of very bad faith; for I know well that one of them, a doctor in theology and a principal of their order, wanted to persuade several of his brethren that the Gospel was no more worthy of belief than Cæsar's Commentaries, or other histories written by authentic doctors; and from the hour I heard that I would never believe a preacher's word, unless I found it conformable to God's, which is the true touchstone for distinguishing true words and false."

"Be assured," said Oisille, "that they who often read it in humility will never be deceived by human fictions or inventions; for whoso has a mind filled with truth cannot receive a lie."

"Yet it seems to me that a simple person is more easily deceived than another," observed Simontault.

"Yes," said Longarine, "if you esteem silliness to be simplicity."

"I say," returned Simontault, "that a good, gentle, simple woman is more easily beguiled than one who is cunning and crafty."

"I suppose you know some one who is too full of such goodness," said Nomerfide; "if so, tell us about her."

"Since you have so well guessed, I will not disappoint you," replied Simontault; "but you must promise me not to weep. Those who say, ladies, that your craftiness exceeds that of men, would find it hard to produce such an example as that I am now about to relate to you, wherein I intend to set forth the great craft of a husband, and the simplicity and good-nature of his wife."

[The preceding novel and epilogue, which are found in all the MSS., are wanting in the edition of 1588. Claude Gouget has substituted the following for them in that of 1559.]

HOW TWO LOVERS CLEVERLY CONSUMMATED THEIR AMOURS, THE
ISSUE OF WHICH WAS HAPPY.

THERE were in Paris two citizens, one of them a lawyer, the other a silk-mercier, who had always been great friends, and on the most familiar terms. The lawyer had a son named Jacques, a young man very presentable in good society, who often visited his father's friend, the mercier; but it was for sake of a handsome daughter the latter had, named Françoise. to whom Jacques paid his court so well, that he became assured she loved him no less than he loved her. Whilst matters stood thus, an army was sent into Provence to oppose the descent which Charles of Austria was about to make in that quarter; and Jacques was forced to join that army, being called out in his order. He had hardly arrived in the camp when he received news of his father's death. This was a double grief to him: on the one hand, from the loss of his father; on the other hand, from the obstacles he plainly foresaw he should encounter on his return to seeing his mistress as often as he had hoped. Time allayed the first of these griefs, but made him feel the other more acutely. As death is in the course of nature, and it is usual for parents to die be-

fore their children, the grief that is felt for their loss gradually subsides. But it is quite otherwise with love; for instead of bringing us death, it brings us life, by giving us children who render us immortal, so to speak; and this it is, principally, which renders our desires the more ardent.

Jacques being then returned to Paris, thought of nothing but how to renew his intimacy with the mercer, in order to traffic in the choicest of his wares under pretext of pure friendship. As Françoise had beauty and sprightliness, and had long been marriageable, she had had several suitors during the absence of Jacques; but whether it was that her father was stingy or that, having but that one child, he wished to establish her well, he had not made much account of any of these suitors. As people do not wait now-a-days before talking scandal until they have just grounds for it, especially where the honor of our sex is concerned, this set people talking ill of Françoise. Her father not choosing to do like many others, who, instead of reproving the faults of their wives and children, seem, on the contrary, to incite them thereto, did not shut his ears or his eyes to the popular opinion, but watched his daughter so closely, that even those who sought her with no other intention than marriage saw her but rarely, and then only in her mother's presence. It need not be asked whether or not such vigilance was irksome to Jacques, who could not conceive that they should treat her so rigorously without some important reason to him unknown. This conjecture distressed him, and distracted his feelings between love and jealousy.

Resolved at all cost to know what might be this mysterious reason, he proposed to ascertain in the first place if she still retained the same tender sentiments toward him; and he went about so assiduously that at last he found means one morning at mass to place himself near her, when he perceived from her manner that she was as glad to see him as he her. As he knew that the mother was not so strict as the father, he sometimes took the liberty, when he met them on their way to church, to accost them familiarly and with ordinary politeness; and this as if he had met them by mere chance, the whole being with a view to prepare matters for the design he meditated.

By-and-by, when the year of mourning for his father was



nearly expired, he resolved, when changing his garments, to put himself on a good footing, and do honor to his ancestors. He spoke of his intention to his mother, who approved of it, and longed the more ardently to see him well married, as she had but two children, himself and a daughter, who was already settled in life. Like an honorable lady as she was, she encouraged her son to virtue by setting before him the example of a great number of young men of his own age, who were making way by themselves, or who at least showed that they were worthy of the parents from whom they derived their being. As the only question now was where they should make their purchases, the good lady said to her son, "It is my opinion, Jacques, that we cannot do better than go to Daddy Pierre's (this was the father of Françoise). He is one of our friends, and would not cheat us."

This was tickling her son where he itched: however, he stood out, and said, "We will go and deal where we are best served, and cheapest. However, as Daddy Pierre was the intimate friend of my late father, I shall be very glad to give him the first call before we go elsewhere."

One morning, accordingly, the mother and son went to see the Sire Pierre, who received them very well, as you know that merchants can do when they scent profit. They had quantities of silk unfolded for their inspection, and chose what suited them; but they could not agree upon the price, for Jacques haggled on purpose, because his mistress's mother did not make her appearance. At last they left the place without making any purchase, and went to look elsewhere; but Jacques could see nothing he liked in any house but his mistress's, and they returned thither some time afterwards. Françoise's mother was there, and gave them the best possible reception. After the little ceremonies were gone through which are practised in such shops, the mercer's wife putting a higher price on her goods than her husband had done, "You are very hard, madam," said Jacques; "but I see how it is. Father is dead, and our friends don't know us now." So saying, he pretended to wipe his eyes, as if the thought of his father had drawn tears from them; but this was only a device to help things forward. His mother, who took the matter up in perfect good faith, said thereupon, in a dolorous tone, "Since the

death of my poor good man, we are visited no more than if we had never been known. Little do people care for poor widows."

Hereupon there ensued new demonstrations of friendship, and mutual promises to visit more frequently than ever. Some other merchants now came in, and were taken by the mercer himself into the back shop. The young man took advantage of this favorable moment to say to his mother, "Madame was formerly in the habit of visiting, on Saints' days, the holy places in our neighborhood, especially the convents. If she would take the trouble sometimes to look in upon us in passing, and take her wine, she would do us much honor and pleasure."

The mercer's wife, who suspected nothing, replied that for more than a fortnight past she had intended to go into their quarter; that she would probably do so on Sunday, if the weather was fine, and would not fail to call and see the lady. The conclusion of this affair was followed by that of the bargain for the silks; for it was no time to stand out for a trifle, and risk losing such a fine opportunity.

Things being in this position, and Jacques considering that he could not bring his project to bear without assistance, he resolved to confide the secret of it to a trusty friend. The two took such good measures together, that nothing remained but to put them in execution. Sunday being come, the mercer's wife and her daughter failed not, on their return from their devotions, to call upon the widow, whom they found chatting with one of her female neighbors in a gallery in the garden, whilst her daughter was walking about the alleys with her brother and his friend, whose name was Olivier. On seeing his mistress, Jacques so commanded his face, that not the least change was visible in it, and he went to welcome the mother and daughter with a gay and unembarrassed air. As elderly people usually seek each other's society, the three old ladies seated themselves on a bench with their backs turned to the garden, into which the two lovers gradually moved off, and joined the other two who were walking there. After a little exchange of compliments, all four renewed their promenade, in the course of which Jacques recounted his piteous case to Françoise so movingly, that she could neither grant nor refuse

what her lover sued for. It needed no more to make him aware that she was smitten.

I must tell you, that during this ambulatory conversation, in order to prevent suspicion, they frequently passed to and fro before the bench on which the good women were seated, taking care always to talk of trivial and indifferent matters, and now and then romping in the garden. After the old ladies had been accustomed to the noise for half an hour, Jacques made a sign to Olivier, who played his part with the other girl so well, that she did not notice the two lovers going into an orchard full of cherries, and inclosed with thick hedges of roses and very tall gooseberry-bushes. They pretended to go into a corner of the orchard to pluck almonds, but it was to pluck prunes. There Jacques, instead of giving his mistress a green gown, gave her a red one, for the color flushed into her cheeks to find herself surprised before she was aware. They had so quickly gathered their prunes, because they were ripe, that Olivier could not have believed it, but that the girl drooped her head, and looked so ashamed. This betokened the truth to him, for before she walked with her head erect, without any fear that the vein in her eye, which ought to be red, should be seen to have the azure hue. Perceiving her confusion, Jacques recalled her to her usual deportment by suitable remonstrances.

The lovers took two or three more turns about the garden, but not without much crying and sobbing on the part of the fair one. "Alas!" she exclaimed, "was it for this you loved me? If I could have thought it, my God! What shall I do? I am undone forever. What account will you make of me henceforth, at least if you are one of those who love only for pleasure? Oh, that I had died before committing such a fault!" Then followed another violent burst of tears. But Jacques exerted himself so much to console her, and made such promises, confirmed by so many oaths, that before they had taken three more turns about the garden, Jacques made another sign to his friend, and they entered the orchard again by another path. In spite of all she could do, she could not help receiving more pleasure from this second green gown than from the first. In short, she liked it so well that they resolved then and there to seek means for meeting oftener and more

commodiously until such time as her father should be more favorably inclined.

A young woman, a neighbor of the mercer's, distantly related to Jacques, and a good friend to Françoise, was of great help to them in bringing the good man to reason. I am informed that they continued their intrigue without discovery or scandal until the consummation of their marriage. Françoise, who was an only child, proved to be very rich for the daughter of a shopkeeper. It is true that Jacques had to wait for the greater part of his wife's fortune until the death of the father, who was so close-fisted and distrustful that what he held in one hand he imagined the other stole from him.

There, ladies, you have an example of a tender connexion well begun, well continued, and better ended : for although it is usual with men to despise a woman or a girl as soon as she has given you what you sue to her for with most eagerness, yet this young man, loving well and in good faith, and having found in his mistress what every husband desires to find in his bride ; knowing, moreover, that the girl was of good family, and correct in all but the fault into which he himself had led her, would not commit adultery elsewhere, or trouble the peace of another household : conduct for which I deem him highly commendable.

"They were both very blamable, however," said Oisille ; "nor was the friend even excusable for having ministered to the crime, or at least acquiesced in such a rape."

"Do you call it a rape when both parties are willing?" said Saffredent. "Are there any better marriages than those which are thus brought about by furtive amours? It has passed into a proverb that marriages are made in heaven ; but this applies neither to forced marriages nor to those which are made for money, and which are regarded as well and duly approved as soon as the father and mother have given their consent."

"You may say what you please," replied Oisille, "but parental authority must be obeyed, and if there be no father or mother, the will of the other relations must be respected. Otherwise, if every one was free to marry according to fancy, how many cornuted marriages would there not be? Can any

one imagine that a young man and a girl from twelve to fifteen years of age know what is good for them? Any one who should carefully examine, would find that there are as many unhappy marriages among those made for love as those made by constraint. Young people who do not know what they want take the first they meet without inquiry; and then, when they come gradually to know the mistake they have committed, this knowledge leads them into still greater errors. Those, on the contrary, who have not been married voluntarily, have entered into that engagement by the advice and at the solicitation of persons who have seen more and possess more judgment than themselves: so that when they come to experience the good they did not know, they enjoy it much better, and embrace it with much more affection."

"Ay, madam," said Hircan, "but you forget that the girl was of ripe years and marriageable, and that she knew the injustice of her father, who let her virginity grow musty for fear of rubbing the rust off his crown-pieces. Do you not know that nature is a frisky jade? She loved, she was loved, she found what she wanted ready to her hand, and she might call to mind the old proverb: 'She that will not when she may, when she will she shall have nay.' All these considerations, added to the promptitude of the assailant, left her no time to defend herself. It has been remarked, too, that immediately afterwards a great change was noticed in her countenance. This change was the result of her dissatisfaction at having had so little time to judge whether the thing was good or bad: accordingly, she did not require very long coaxing to prevail on her to make a second trial."

"For my part," said Longarine, "I should not think her excusable but for the good faith of the young man, who, acting like an honest man, did not forsake her, but took her such as as he had made her; for which I think him the more deserving of praise, as youth in these days is very corrupt. I do not pretend for all that to excuse his first fault, which virtually amounted to rape with regard to the daughter, and subornation with regard to the mother."

"Not at all, not at all," interrupted Dagoucín; "there was neither rape nor subornation, but all happened voluntarily, both on the part of the mothers, who did not prevent it,

though they were duped, and on that of the girl, who liked it well, and never complained."

"All this," said Parlamente, "was only the consequence of the good-nature and simplicity of the mercer's wife, who in good faith led her daughter to the butchery without knowing it."

"Why not say to the wedding?" said Simontault, "since this simplicity was not less advantageous to the girl than it was prejudicial to a wife who was too easily the dupe of her husband."

"Since you know the story," said Nomerfide, "tell it us."

"With all my heart," replied Simontault, "on condition you promise me not to weep. Those who say, ladies, that you have more craft than men, would find it hard to produce an example like that of which I am going to speak. I purpose to exhibit to you not only the great craft of a husband, but also the extreme simplicity and good-nature of his wife."

NOVEL XLV.

A husband, giving the Innocents to his servant girl, plays upon his wife's simplicity.

THERE was at Tours a shrewd, cunning fellow, who was upholsterer to the late Duke of Orleans, son of King Francis I. Though this upholsterer had become deaf in consequence of a severe illness, he nevertheless retained the full use of his wits, and was so well endowed in that respect, that there was not a man in his trade more cunning than himself. As for other matters, you shall see from what I am about to relate to you how he contrived to acquit himself. He had married a good and honorable woman, with whom he lived very peaceably. He was greatly afraid of displeasing her, and she also studied to obey him in all things. But for all the great affection the husband had for his wife, he was so charitable, that he often gave his female neighbors what belonged to her; but this he always did as secretly as possible. They had a good stout wench as a servant, of whom the upholsterer fell in love. Fearing, however, lest his wife should perceive it, he affected

often to scold her, saying she was the laziest creature he had ever seen ; but that he did not wonder at it since her mistress never beat her.

One day, when they were talking of giving the Innocents,* the upholsterer said to his wife, " It would be a great charity to give them to that lazy jade of yours, but it would not do for her to receive them from your hand, for it is too weak, and your heart is too tender. If I were to put my own hand to the job, we should be better served by her than we are." The poor woman, suspecting nothing, begged that he would perform the operation, confessing that she had neither the heart nor the strength to do it. The husband willingly undertook the

* The learned Gregory, in his treatise on the Boy Bishop, preserved in his posthumous works, observes that " it hath been a custom, and yet is elsewhere, to whip up the children upon Innocents' Day morning, that the memorie of Herod's murder of the Innocents might stick the closer, and in a moderate proportion to act over the crueltie again in kinde." This custom is mentioned by Haspinian, De Orig. Festor. Christianor. fol. 160 : " Hujus lanienæ truculentissimæ ut pueri Christianorum recordentur, et simul discant odium, persecutionem, crucem, exilium, egestatemque statim cum nato Christo incipere, virgis cædi solent in aurora hujus diei adhuc in lectulis jacentes a parentibus suis." That which was at first a serious parody of the martyrdom of Bethlehem, afterwards degenerated into a jocular usage, and persons past the age of childhood, young women especially, were made to play the part of the Innocents. It is related that a Seigneur du Rivau, taking leave of some ladies to join a hunting-party at a considerable distance, heard one of them whisper to another, " We shall sleep at our ease, and pass the Innocents without receiving them." This put Du Rivau on his mettle. He kept his appointment, galloped back twenty leagues by night, arrived at the lady's house at dawn on Innocents' Day, surprised her in bed, and used the privilege of the season. " Vous savez," says the author of the *Escraignes (Veillées) Dijonnaises*, " que l'on a à Dijon cette peute coutume de fouetter les filles le jour des Innocens, la quelle est entretenue par les braves amoureux, pour avoir occasion de donner quelques chose aux estrennes à leurs amoureuses." Clement Marot has the following epigram on this subject :

" Très chère sœur, si je savois où couche
Votre personne au jour des Innocents,
De bon matin j'irois en votre couche
Veoir ce gent corps que j'aime entre cinq cents.
Adonc ma main (veu l'ardeur que je sens)
Ne se pourroit bonnement contenter
De vous toucher, tenir, taster, tenter :
Et si quelqu'un survenoit d'aventure,
Semblant ferois de vous innocenter,
Seroit-ce pas honneste couverture ? "

commission, and as if he intended to flog the wench soundly, he bought the finest rods he could procure ; and to show that he had no mind to spare her, he steeped them in pickle, so that the poor woman felt more compassion for her servant than suspicion of her husband.

Innocents' Day being come, the upholsterer rose betimes, went to the upper room, where the servant lay alone, and gave her the Innocents in a very different manner from that he had talked of to his wife. The servant fell a-crying, but her tears were of no avail. For fear, however, that his wife should come up, he began to whip the bedpost at such a rate that he made the rods fly in pieces, and then he carried them broken as they were to his wife. "I think, my dear," said he, showing them to her, "that your servant will not soon forget the Innocents."

The upholsterer having gone out of doors, the servant went and threw herself at her mistress's feet, and complained that her husband had behaved to her in the most shameful way that ever a servant was treated. The good woman imagining that she spoke of the flogging she had received, interrupted her, and said, "My husband has done well, and just as I have been begging him to do this month and more. If he has made you smart I am very glad of it. You may lay it all to me. He has not given you half as much as he ought."

When the girl perceived that her mistress approved of such an act, she concluded that it was not such a great sin as she had supposed, seeing that a woman who was considered so virtuous was the cause of it; and so she never ventured to complain of it again. The upholsterer, seeing that his wife was as glad to be deceived as he was to deceive her, resolved frequently to give her the same satisfaction, and gained the servant's consent so well, that she cried no more for getting the Innocents. He continued the same course for a long time without his wife's knowing anything of the matter, until winter came, and there was a great fall of snow. As he had given his servant the Innocents in the garden on the green grass, he took a fancy to give them to her also on the snow; and one morning before any one was awake, he took her out into the garden in her shift, to make the crucifix on the snow. They romped and pelted each other, and among the sport that of the Innocents was not forgotten. One of the neighbors

meanwhile had gone to her window to see what sort of weather it was. The window looked right over the upholsterer's garden, and the woman saw the game of the Innocents that was going on there, and was so shocked that she resolved to inform her good gossip, that she might no longer be the dupe of such a wicked husband and vicious servant. After the upholsterer had finished his fine game, he looked round to see if he had been noticed by any one, and to his great vexation he saw his neighbor at her window. But as he knew how to give all sorts of colors to his tapestry, so he thought he should be able to put such a color on this fact that his neighbor would be no less deceived than his wife. No sooner had he got to bed again than he made his wife get up in her shift, and took her to the very spot where he had been toying with the servant. He frolicked awhile with her at snowball throwing, as he had done with the servant; next he gave her the Innocents as he had done to the other; and then they went back to bed.

The next time the upholsterer's wife went to mass, her neighbor and good friend failed not to meet her there, and entreated her with very great earnestness, but without saying more, to discharge her servant, who was a good-for-nothing, dangerous creature. The upholsterer's wife said she would do no such thing, unless the other told her why she thought the wench so good-for-nothing and dangerous. The neighbor, thus pressed, stated at last that she had seen her one morning in the garden with her husband.

"It was I, gossip dearie," replied the good woman, laughing.

"What!" cried the neighbor. "Stripped to your shift in the garden at four o'clock in the morning!"

"Yes, gossip," said the upholsterer's wife. "In good sooth, it was myself."

"They pelted each other with snow," continued the neighbor, "and he played with her teaties and all that sort of thing as familiarly as you please."

"Yes, gossip, it was myself."

"But, gossip," rejoined the neighbor, "I saw them do upon the snow a thing that seems to me neither decent nor proper."

"That may be, gossip dearie," replied the upholsterer's

wife; "but as I told you before and tell you again, it was myself and no one else that did all this; for my good husband and I divert ourselves in that way together. Don't be shocked, pray. You know that we are bound to please our husbands."

The end of the matter was that the neighbor went home much more disposed to wish that she had such a husband, than to pity her good friend. When the upholsterer came home, his wife repeated to him the whole conversation she had had with her neighbor. "It is well for you, my dear," he replied, "that you are a good and sensible woman; for but for that, we should have been separated long ago. But I trust that by God's grace we shall love each other in time to come as much as we have in the past, and that to His glory, and to our own comfort and satisfaction."

"Amen, my dear," said the good woman. "I hope too that you will never find me fail to do my part towards maintaining the good understanding between us." *

One must be very incredulous, ladies, if, after hearing so true a story, one were of opinion that there was as much wickedness in you as in men; though, to say the truth, without wronging any one, one cannot help coming to the conclusion with regard to the man and woman in question, that neither the one nor the other was good for anything.

"This man was prodigiously wicked," said Parlamente; "for on the one hand he deceived his wife, and on the other his servant."

* Dunlop thinks that this novel was probably taken from the fabliau of some Trouveur, who had obtained it from the East, as it corresponds with the story of the Shopkeeper's Wife in Nakshebi's Persian Tales, known by the name of Tooti Nameh, or Tales of a Parrot. The Queen of Navarre's version of the story has been imitated by Lafontaine, under the title of *La Servante Justifiée*. He was particularly struck by the exceedingly comic reiteration of the phrase, "It was I, gossip," in the dialogue between the simple-witted wife and her neighbor, and says in his opening lines:

"Pour cette fois, la Reine de Navarre
D'un c'ETOIT MOI naïf autant que rare,
Entretiendra dans ces vers le lecteur."

"You cannot have rightly understood the story," said Hircan; "for it states that he satisfied them both in one morning: a great feat, considering the contrariety of their interests."

"In that respect, he was doubly a knave," replied Parlamente, "to satisfy the simplicity of the one by a lie, and the malice of the other by an act of vice. But I am quite aware that such as these will always be pardoned when they have such judges as you."

"I assure you, however," rejoined Hircan, "that I will never undertake anything so great or so difficult, for provided I satisfy you, my day will not have been ill employed."

"If mutual love does not content the heart," returned Parlamente, "all the rest cannot do so."

"That is true," said Simontault. "I am persuaded there is no greater pain than to love, and not to be loved."

"In order to be loved," said Parlamente, "one should turn to those who love; but very often those women who will not love are the most loved, and those men love most who are the least loved."

"That reminds me," said Oisille, "of a tale which I had not intended to introduce among good ones."

"Pray tell it us," said Simontault.

"I will do so with pleasure," replied Oisille.

NOVEL XLVI.

A Sanctimonious Cordelier attempts to debauch the wife of a Judge, and actually ravishes a young Lady, whose mother had foolishly authorized him to chastise her for lying too late in bed.

In the town of Angoulême, where Count Charles, father of King Francis, often resided, there was a Cordelier named De Vale, who was esteemed a learned man and a great preacher. One Advent he preached in the town before the count, and was so much admired that those who knew him eagerly invited him to dinner. Among these was the Judge of Exempts of

the county, who had married a handsome and virtuous wife, of whom the Cordelier was dying for love, though he had not the boldness to tell her so; she, however, perceived it, and held him and his passion in disdain. One day he observed her going up to the garret all alone, and thinking to surprise her, he went up after her; but on hearing his steps she turned round, and asked whither he was going. "I am coming after you," he replied. "I have a secret to tell you."

"Don't come after me, good father," said the judge's wife, "for I do not choose to talk with such as you in secret, and if you come another step higher you shall repent of it."

The friar, seeing her alone, took no heed of her words, and ran up; but she being a woman of spirit, as soon as he was at the top, gave him a kick in the belly, saying, "Down, down, sir," and sent him rolling from the top to the bottom. The poor friar was so much ashamed of his discomfiture that he forgot his hurt, and ran out of the town as fast as he could, for he was sure she would not conceal the matter from her husband. No more she did, nor from the count and countess, so that the Cordelier durst not appear again in their presence.

To complete his wickedness, he went away to the house of a lady who loved the Cordeliers above all other folk; and after he had preached a sermon or two before her, he cast eyes upon her daughter, who was very handsome; and because she did not rise in the morning to go and hear his sermon, he often scolded her before her mother, who used to say, "I wish to God, father, she had tasted a little of the discipline which you and your pious brethren administer to each other." The good father vowed he would give her some of it if she continued to be so lazy, and the mother begged he would do so. A day or two after the good father entered the lady's room, and not seeing her daughter, asked where she was. "She fears you so little, that she is still in bed," replied the lady.

"Assuredly it is a very bad habit in young people to be so lazy," replied the friar. "Few people make much account of the sin of laziness; but for my part I esteem it one of the most dangerous of all, both for the body and the soul; wherefore you should chastise her well for it; or, if you will leave

the business to me, I warrant I will cure her of lying in bed at an hour when she should be at her devotions."

The poor lady, believing that he was a good man, begged he would be pleased to correct her daughter, which he proceeded to do forthwith. Going up a little wooden staircase he found the girl all alone in bed, fast asleep, and sleeping as she was, he ravished her. The poor girl, waking up, knew not whether it was a man or a devil, and began to scream as loud as she could, and cry for help to her mother, who called out from the foot of the stairs, "Do not spare her, sir; give it her again, and chastise the naughty hussey." When the Cordelier had accomplished his wicked purpose he went down to the lady, and said to her with his face all on fire, "I think, madam, your daughter will not forget the discipline I have given her."

After thanking him heartily the mother went up to her daughter, who was making such lamentation as a virtuous woman well might who had been the victim of such a crime; and when she had learned the truth she sent everywhere to look for the Cordelier, but he was already far away, and never afterwards was he found in the realm of France.

You see, ladies, what comes of giving such commissions to persons who are not fit to be trusted with them. The correction of men belongs to men, and of women to women; for in correcting men, women would be as pitiful as men would be cruel in correcting women.

"Jesus! madam," said Parlamente, "what a wicked villain of a Cordelier!"

"Say, rather," said Hircan, "what a silly fool of a mother, who, cajoled by hypocrisy, allowed so much familiarity to one of a class of men who ought never to be seen but in church."

"Truly," said Parlamente, "I own she was one of the silliest mothers that ever was; and if she had been as wise as the judge's wife, she would rather have made him go down the stairs than up them. But your half-angel devil is the most dangerous of all, and knows so well how to transform himself into an angel of light, that one makes it matter of conscience to suspect him for what he is; and it seems to me that the person who is not suspicious deserves praise."

"Nevertheless," said Oisille, "one ought to suspect the evil

that is to be avoided ; especially so should those who have charge of others ; for it is better to suspect mischief where it does not exist, than to fall through foolishly believing in the harmlessness of that which does exist. I have never seen a woman deceived for being slow to believe the word of men, but many a one for having too readily put faith in lies. Therefore I say that the mischief which may happen cannot be too much suspected by those who have charge of men, women, towns, and states ; for, in spite of the best watch, wickedness and treachery greatly prevail, and the shepherd who is not vigilant will always suffer from the wiles of the wolf."

"Nevertheless," said Dagoucin, "a suspicious person cannot maintain a perfect friendship, and many friends have been parted by a suspicion."

"Supposing that you know a case in point," said Oisille, "I call upon you to relate it."

"I know one so true that you will take pleasure in hearing it," replied Dagoucin. "I will tell you what is most sure to break friendship, ladies, and that is, when the very confidence of the friendship begins to give occasion for suspicion ; for, as trusting a friend is the greatest honor one can do him, so doubting him is the greatest dishonor, for it shows that he is thought other than one would have him be, which is the cause of breaking many friendships and turning friends into enemies, as you will see by the tale I am about to relate to you."

[This novel is wanting in the edition of 1558, and the following is substituted for it in that of 1559.]

A CORDELIER'S SERMONS ON THE SUBJECT OF HUSBANDS BEATING THEIR WIVES.

IN Angoulême, where Count Charles, father of King Francis I., often made his residence, there was a Cordelier named De Valles, a man of knowledge, and so esteemed as a preacher, that he was selected to preach the Advent sermons before the count, a fact which still further enhanced his reputation. It happened during Advent, that a young scatterbrain of the town, who had married a young and very pretty woman, continued to run after other women right and left, just as dis-solutely as though he were unmarried. The young wife, dis-

covering this, could not conceal her resentment, and was often paid for it sooner and otherwise than she would have liked. All this did not hinder her from continuing her lamentations, and sometimes even from proceeding to abuse and railing, by which conduct she so exasperated her husband that he beat her black and blue, and then she made more noise than ever. The neighbors' wives, who knew the cause of their quarrels, could not keep silence, but cried out publicly in the streets, "Fie for shame! To the devil with such husbands!"

By good luck the Cordelier de Valles was passing that way. Having heard the noise, and learned the cause of it, he resolved to touch upon it next day in his sermon; and so he did, bringing in the subject of marriage, and the affection which ought to accompany it. He pronounced a eulogy on the wedded state, strongly censured those who violated its duties, and instituted a comparison between conjugal and parental love. Among other things, he said that a husband was more to be condemned for beating his wife than for beating his father or mother; "For," said he, "if you beat your father or mother, you will be sent for penance to Rome; but if you beat your wife, she and her female neighbors will send you to all the devils, that is to say, to hell. Now just see the difference there is between these two penances. One usually comes back from Rome; but from hell there is no returning. *Nulla est redemptio.*"

Subsequently he was informed that the women took advantage of what he had said, and that their husbands could no longer be masters: and this mischief he desired to remedy, as he had that under which the women had labored. To this end, in another sermon he compared women to devils, and said that the two were man's greatest enemies and perpetual persecutors, which he could not get rid of, especially women. "In fact," said he, "the devils fly when they are shown the cross, and women do quite the contrary, for it is that which tames them, makes them go and come, and is the cause of their putting their husbands into no end of passions. Would you know, my good people," said he to the husbands, "the way this is to be remedied? Here it is. When you see that your wives torment you incessantly, as is their wont, take the handle of the cross, and thrash them well with it. You will

not have done this above three or four times before you will find yourselves the better for it, and will see that as the devil is driven away by the cross, so you will drive your wives away, and make them hold their tongues, by virtue of the handle of the same cross, provided it be not attached."

There, ladies, is a sample of the sermons of the venerable Cordelier de Valles, of whose life I will tell you no more, and for good reason. I will only say that for all he put a good face on the matter, for I knew the man, he was much more for the women than the men.

"He gave a very bad proof of that in this last sermon of his," said Parlamente, "since he instructed the men to maltreat them."

"You do not discern his cunning," said Hircan. "As you have not much experience of war, you cannot be acquainted with the stratagems that are necessary in it, one of the greatest of which is to create division in the enemy's camp; for then he is more easily beaten. Just so Master Monk knew that aversion and anger between husband and wife often occasion a loose rein to be given to female honor. As virtue is the guard of that honor, it finds itself under the fangs of the wolf before it is aware that it is gone astray."

"Be that as it may," said Parlamente, "I could never love a man who had sown discord between my husband and me to the extent of coming to blows; for with beating there is an end to love. Yet they can be so very demure, as I have heard, when they want to cajole some woman or another, and talk in so engaging a manner, that I am sure there would be more danger in listening to them in secret than in publicly receiving blows from a husband who in other respects was a good one."

"In truth," said Dagoucin, "they have made themselves so notorious that one has good cause to fear them, though, in my opinion, it is a laudable thing not to be suspicious."

"One ought, however, to suspect the evil that may be avoided," said Oisille, "and it is better to fear an imaginary ill than to fall into a real one for want of belief. For my part, I have never known a woman to have been beguiled for having been slow to believe men; but I have known many a one who has been beguiled for too easily believing their falsehoods.

Consequently I maintain that those who have charge of men, women, towns, and states, can never too much fear and suspect the evil that may happen. Wickedness and treachery are so much in vogue, that one cannot be too much on one's guard: and the shepherd who is not vigilant will always be plundered by the sly and crafty wolf."

"It is nevertheless true," observed Dagoucin, "that a distrustful and suspicious person can never be a perfect friend; and many friendships have been broken upon a mere suspicion."

"If you know any example in point, tell it us," said Oisille.

"I know one," he replied, "so true, that you will feel pleasure in hearing it. I am going to tell you, ladies, of what most easily breaks friendship, and that is, when the very security of the friendship itself begins to inspire suspicion. As one cannot do a friend a greater honor than to trust in him, so likewise one cannot offer him a keener insult than to distrust him. The reason is, that one thereby shows that one believes him to be quite different from what one would have him to be; and this causes a breach between many good friends, and makes them enemies, an instance of which you shall see in the tale I am about to tell you."

NOVEL XLVII.

A gentleman of the Pays du Perche, distrusting his friend, obliges him to do him the mischief of which he has falsely suspected him.

NEAR the Pays du Perche there were two gentlemen, who from their childhood had been such perfectly good friends, that they had but one heart, one house, one bed, one table, and one purse. Their perfect friendship lasted a long while, without there having ever been the least dispute, or even a word that savored of it; for they lived, not merely like two brothers, but like one man. One of the two married, but this did not diminish his affection for the other, or prevent his continuing to live with him as happily as before. When they happened to be in any place where beds were scarce he made him sleep with his wife and him. It is true that he himself

lay in the middle. All their goods were in common, so that the marriage, whatever might happen, never altered this perfect friendship.

But as there is nothing solid and permanent in this world, time brought about a change in the felicity of a too happy household. The husband, forgetting the confidence he had in his friend, became jealous without cause of him and his wife, to whom he could not refrain from saying some harsh things, whereat she was the more surprised, as he had ordered her to treat his friend in all respects, save one, exactly like himself. All this, however, did not hinder him from forbidding her to speak to him, unless it was in full company. She made known this prohibition to her husband's friend, who could not believe it, well knowing that he had not done or thought anything with which his friend could be displeased. As he was accustomed to conceal nothing from him, he told him what he had heard, begging him to disguise nothing, for it was his earnest desire not to give him, either in that or in any other matter, the least cause to break a friendship of such long duration.

The husband assured him he had never harbored such a thought, and that those who had spread this report had foully lied. "I know well," said the friend, "that jealousy is a passion as insupportable as love; and though you were jealous, and even of me, I should not be angry with you, for you could not help it. But I should have reason to complain of a thing which it is in your own power to do or not to do, and that is, to conceal the matter from me, seeing that you have never yet concealed from me any opinion or emotion you have known. On my part, if I were in love with your wife, you ought not to make it a crime in me, for love is a fire which no one can master; but if I concealed the fact from you, and sought means to make it known to your wife, I should be the worst man that ever lived. Besides, though you have a good wife and a worthy, I can assure you that even though she were not yours, she is, of all the women I have ever seen, the one I should give myself the least concern about. I pray you, however, if you have the least suspicion, to tell me so, in order to take measures accordingly, so that our long friendship may not be broken for sake of a woman;

for even if I loved your wife above all the women in the world, I would never speak to her in that case, because I prefer your friendship to any other."

The husband protested to him with great oaths that he had never had such a thought, and begged that he would continue with him in all respects upon the old footing. "I will do so, since you desire it," replied the friend; "but allow me to tell you, that I never will live with you if, after this, you have such a thought of me, and keep a secret from me, or take it amiss."

They continued then to live together on the same terms as before, until, after some time, the husband's jealous fit came upon him more strongly than ever, and he ordered his wife no longer to show his friend the same fair countenance. She immediately informed the friend of this, and begged him not to speak to her, as she was forbidden to speak to him. The friend, seeing from this and from certain grimaces of his comrade that he had not kept his word, said to him in great indignation, "If you are jealous, my friend, that is a natural thing; but, after the oaths you have sworn to me, I cannot help telling you that I am aggrieved by your having concealed it so long. I had always believed that between your heart and mine there was no medium or obstacle; but I see with regret, and without any fault of mine, that I have not succeeded so well as I had hoped, since not only are you jealous of your wife and me, but you furthermore want to make a mystery of it, in order that your malady may endure so long that it may turn into hatred, and the closest friendship which has been seen in our day be succeeded by the most mortal enmity. I have done what I could to prevent this mischief, but since you believe me to be so wicked, and the reverse of all I have ever been, I solemnly vow to you that I will be such as you take me to be, and that I will never rest until I have had from your wife what you imagine I am striving for; and I warn you henceforth to be on your guard against me. Since suspicion has made you renounce my friendship, resentment makes me renounce yours."

The husband tried to make him believe that it was all a mistake, but the other would not listen to him. The furniture and property they had in common were divided, and this

division was accompanied by that of their hearts, which had always been so united. The unmarried gentleman kept his word, and never rested until he had made his friend a cuckold.

So be it, ladies, to all those who distrust their wives without cause. A woman of honor sooner suffers herself to be overcome by despair than by all the pleasures in the world, and many husbands who are unjustly jealous behave so that at last they have just cause for jealousy, and make their wives do what they suspect them of. Some say that jealousy is love : I deny it ; for though it issues from love as ashes from fire, just so it kills it, just as ashes smother the flame.

"I am persuaded," said Hircan, "that there is nothing more irritating to man or woman than to be unjustly suspected. For my own part, there is nothing would sooner make me break with my friends."

"Yet it is not a reasonable excuse," said Oisille, "for a woman to say she revenges herself for her husband's suspicions at the cost of her own shame ; it is doing like a man who, not being able to kill his enemy, runs himself through with his own sword, or bites his own fingers when he cannot scratch him. She would have acted more wisely in never speaking to the friend, in order to show her husband that he was wrong in suspecting her, for time would have reconciled them."

"She acted like a woman of spirit," said Ennasuite ; "and if there were many wives like her, their husbands would not be so outrageous."

"After all," said Longarine, "patience finally enables a chaste woman to triumph, and by it she should abide."

"A woman, however, may be sinless, and yet not chaste," observed Ennasuite.

"How do you mean?" asked Oisille.

"When she mistakes another for her husband," replied Ennasuite.

"And where is the fool !" exclaimed Parlamente, "who does not know the difference between her husband and another man, disguise himself as he may?"

"There have been, and there will be," rejoined Ennasuite, "those who have made such a mistake in perfect good faith, and who consequently are not culpable."

“ If you know an instance of the kind, relate it to us,” said Dagoucin ; “ to me it seems that innocence and sin are two very incompatible things.”

“ Well, ladies,” said Ennasuite, “ if the stories you have already heard have not sufficiently shown you that it is dangerous to lodge those who call us mundane, and look upon themselves as saints, and as persons much more regenerate than we are, here is a tale which will convince you not only that they are men like others, but that they have in them something diabolical exceeding the common wickedness of men.”

NOVEL XLVIII.

A Cordelier took the husband's place on his wedding-night, while the latter was dancing with the bridal party.

A GIRL having been married in a village in Perigord, the wedding was celebrated at an inn, where all the relations and friends made merry with the best cheer. Two Cordeliers arrived on the wedding-day, and as it was not in accordance with propriety that they should be present at the marriage-feast, they had their suppers served up to them in their chamber. That one of the pair who had the most authority, and also the most villainy, conceived that since he was not allowed to partake with the rest at board, he ought to have his share in bed, and resolved to show them a trick of his trade.

When evening came, and the dance was begun, the Cordelier gazed long on the bride from the window, and found her handsome and much to his taste. He inquired of the servant-girls which was the bridal-chamber, and learned, to his great satisfaction, that it was close to his own ; and then, in order to arrive at his ends, he took care to watch well till he saw the old women steal off with the bride, as usual on such occasions. As it was still early, the husband would not quit the dance, on which he was so intent that he seemed to have forgotten his bride, which the Cordelier had not done ; for as

soon as his ears informed him that she had been put to bed, he threw off his grey robe, and went and took the bridegroom's place. The fear of being surprised did not allow him to remain there long. He rose, therefore, and went to the end of an alley, where his companion, whom he had left on the watch, signalled to him that the bridegroom was still dancing. The Cordelier, who had not satisfied his wicked lust, then went back to the bride, and stayed with her until his companion made the signal that it was time to go away.

The bridegroom went to bed, and the bride, who had been so briskly plied by the Cordelier, and wanted nothing but rest, could not help saying to her husband, "Have you made up your mind never to go to sleep, but to worry me all night long?" The poor husband, who had but just lain down, asked her in great amazement how he had worried her, seeing that he had been dancing all the evening. "Fine dancing, indeed," said the poor woman; "this is the third time you have come to bed. You had better go to sleep, I think."

Astounded at these words, the husband insisted on knowing the exact truth. After she had related to him the whole thing just as it had occurred, he got up instantly, making no doubt it was the Cordeliers, and went to their chamber, which, as before mentioned, was not far from his own. Not finding them, he shouted for help so loud, that all his friends came flocking round him. When he had told them the fact, every one helped him with candles, lanterns, and all the dogs in the village to hunt for the Cordeliers. Not finding them in the houses, they beat the country road, and caught them in the vineyards, where they treated them as they deserved; for after having well beaten them, they cut off their legs and arms, and left them among the vines to the care of Bacchus and Venus, of whom they were better disciples than of St. Francis.

Do not be astonished, ladies, if these people, who are distinguished by a manner of living so different from ours, do things which adventurers would be ashamed to do. You may rather wonder that they do not do worse, when God withdraws his grace from them. The habit does not always make the monk, as the proverb says. It often unmakes him, and pride is the cause.

" Mon Dieu ! " said Oisille, " shall we never have done with tales about these monks ? "

" If ladies, princes, and gentlemen are not spared," said Ennasuite, " it strikes me they have no reason to complain if they are not spared either. They are, for the most part, so useless, that no one would ever mention them if they did not commit some rascality worthy of memory ; which makes good the proverb, that it is better to do mischief than to do nothing at all. Besides, the more diversified our bouquet, the handsomer it will be."

" If you promise not to be angry," said Hircan, " I will tell you a story of a great lady so insatiable in love, that you will excuse the poor Cordelier for having taken what he wanted where he found it, the more so as the lady of whom I have to speaking, having plenty to eat, indulged her craving for tit-bits in a way that was too bad."

" Since we have vowed to speak the truth," said Oisille, " we have also vowed to hear it. You may then speak freely ; for the evil we speak of men and women does not injure those who are the heroes of the tale, and only serves to cure people of the esteem they have for the creatures, and the confidence they might repose in them, by showing the faults to which they are subject, to the end that we may rest our hopes on none but Him who is alone perfect, and without whom every man is but imperfection."

" Well then," said Hircan, " I will proceed boldly with my story."

NOVEL XLIX.

Of a Countess who diverted herself adroitly with love sport, and how her game was discovered.

At the court of one of the kings of France, named Charles (I will not say which of them, for the honor of the lady of whom I am about to speak, and whom I shall also abstain from naming), there was a foreign countess of very good family. As new things please, this lady at once attracted all eyes, both by the novelty of her costume, and by its richness

and magnificence. Though she was not a beauty of the first order, she possessed, nevertheless, so much grace, such a lofty deportment, and a manner of speaking which inspired so much respect, that no one ventured to attempt her, except the king, who was very much in love with her. That he might enjoy her society more freely, he gave the count her husband a commission which kept him a long time away from the court, and during that interval the king diverted himself with the countess.

Several of the king's gentlemen, seeing that their master was well treated by the countess, took the liberty to speak to her on the subject; among the rest, one named Astillon, an enterprising and handsome man. At first she answered him with great dignity, and thought to frighten him by threatening to complain to the king his master; but he, who was not a man to be moved by the menaces of an intrepid captain, made light of those which the lady held forth, and pressed her so closely, that she consented to grant him a private interview, and even told him what he should do in order to reach her chamber; a lesson which he failed neither to remember nor to practise. To prevent any suspicion on the king's part, he made a pretense of a journey to obtain leave of absence for some days, and actually took his departure from the court, but quitted his retinue at the first stage, and returned at night to receive the favors which the countess had promised him. She fulfilled her promise; and he was so satisfied with his reception, that he was content to remain seven or eight days shut up in a *garderobe*, living on nothing but aphrodisiacs.

During the time he was thus confined, one of his comrades, named Duracier, came to make love to the countess. She went through the same ceremonies with this second wooer as with the first, spoke to him at first sternly and haughtily, softened to him only by degrees; and on the day she let the first prisoner go, she put the second into his place. Whilst he was there, a third came, named Valbenon, and had the same treatment as his two predecessors. After these three came two or three others, who also had part in that sweet captivity; and so it went on for a long while, the intrigue being so nicely conducted that not one of the whole number knew anything of the adventures of the rest. They heard plenty of talk, indeed,

of the passion of every one of them for the countess, but there was not one of them but believed himself to be the only favored lover, and laughed in his sleeve at his disappointed rivals.

One day, all these gentlemen being met together at an entertainment, at which they made very good cheer, they began to talk about their adventures, and the prisons in which they had been during the wars. Valbenon, who was not the man to keep a secret which flattered his vanity, said to the others, "I know in what prisons you have been ; but as for me, I have been in one for sake of which I will speak well of prisons in general as long as I live ; for I don't believe there is a pleasure in the world equal to that of being a prisoner."

Astillon, who had been the first prisoner, at once suspected what prison he meant. "Under what jailer," he asked, "were you so well treated, that you were so fond of your prison?"

"Be the jailer who he may," replied Valbenon, "the prison was so agreeable that I was very loth to leave it so soon, for I never was better treated or more comfortable than there."

Duracier, who hitherto had said nothing, shrewdly suspected that the prison in question was that in which he had been confined, as well as the other two. "Tell me," said he to Valbenon, "what sort of food did they give you in that same prison you praise so highly?"

"Food? The king has not better, or more nutritive," was the reply.

"But I should like to know, too," returned Duracier, "did not the person who kept you prisoner make you earn your bread?"

"Hah! Ventrebleu!" cried Valbenon, who saw that the mark was hit. "Have I had comrades? I thought myself the only one."

"Well," said Astillon, laughing, "we are all companions and friends from our youth, and all serve the same master. If we all share alike in the same *bonne fortune*, we may well laugh in company. But in order to know if what I imagine is true, pray let me interrogate you, and all of you tell me the truth. If what I suppose has happened to us, it is the oddest and most amusing adventure that ever could be imagined."

All swore they would speak the truth, at least if matters

were so that they could not help doing so. "I will relate my adventure to you," said Astillon, "and you will each answer me yes or no, if yours is like it or not."

Every one having agreed to this, "In the first place," said Astillon, "I asked leave of absence of the king, under pretence of a journey."

"And so did we," said the others.

"When I was two leagues from the court, I left my retinue, and went and surrendered myself a prisoner."

"And so did we."

"I remained for seven or eight days hid in a *garderobe*, where I was fed upon nothing but restoratives, and the best viands I ever tasted. At the end of eight days, my keepers let me go, much weaker than I had come."

They all swore that they had been served just the same way.

"My imprisonment ended such a day," continued Astillon.

"Mine began the very day yours ended," said Duracier, "and lasted until such a day."

Valbenon now lost patience, and began to swear. "By the Lord," said he, "I find I was the third, though I thought myself the first and the only one; for I entered such a day, and left such another."

The other three who were at table swore that they had entered and departed successively in the same order.

"Since that is the case," said Astillon, "I will describe our jailer. She is married, and her husband is away."

"The very same," said all the others.

"As I was the first enrolled," continued Astillon, "I will be the first to name her, for our common relief. She is the countess, who was so haughty, that in winning her, I thought I had done as great a feat as if I had vanquished Cæsar. To the devil with the slut, that made us toil so hard, and deem ourselves so fortunate in having won her. There never was a more infernal woman. Whilst she had one of us caged, she was trapping another, so that the place might never be vacant. I would rather die than not have my revenge."

They all asked Duracier what he thought of the matter, and in what manner she ought to be punished; adding, that they were ready to put their hands to the work.

"It strikes me," said he, "that we ought to tell the facts to the king our master, who esteems her as a goddess."

"We will not do that," said Astillon; "we can revenge ourselves very well without our master's aid. Let us wait for her to-morrow when she goes to mass, every man with an iron chain round his neck, and when she enters the church, we will salute her as is fitting."

This suggestion was unanimously approved. Every one provided himself with a chain, and next morning, dressed all in black, with their chains round their necks, they presented themselves to the countess as she was going to church. When she saw them in that trim, she burst out laughing, and said to them, "Whither go these people that look in such doleful plight?"

"As your poor captive slaves, madam," said Astillon, "we are come to do you service."

"You are not my captives," she replied, "and I know no reason why you should be bound more than others to do me service."

Valbenon then advanced: "We have so long eaten your bread, madam," he said, "that we should be very ungrateful not to do you service."

She pretended not to have the least idea of what he meant, and preserved an unruffled air, thinking thereby to disconcert them; but they played their parts so well that she could not but be aware that the thing was discovered. Nevertheless, she quite baffled them, for as she had lost honor and conscience, she did not take to herself the shame they sought to put upon her; but as one who preferred her pleasure to all the honor in the world, she showed them no worse a countenance for what they had done, and carried her head as high as ever, whereat they were so astounded that they felt themselves as much ashamed as they had meant to make her.*

* "The adventure related by Margaret in this novel is one of the most *piquant* in the whole Heptameron. It would be very interesting to know the real names of the persons concerned. Brantôme has not disclosed them; he only says: 'I knew a very great lady, a widow. . . . Although she was in a manner adored by a very great person, yet she could not do without some other lovers in private, that she might not lose any time, or remain idle. I refer to that lady in the *Cent Nou-*

If you do not think, ladies, that this tale sufficiently shows that women are as bad as men, I will tell you others. It strikes me, however, that this one is enough to show you that a woman who has lost shame does evil a thousand times more audaciously than a man.

There was not a lady in the company who, on hearing this story, did not make so many signs of the cross, that one would have thought she saw all the devils in hell.

"Let us humble ourselves, mesdames," said Oisille, "at the contemplation of such horrible conduct, the more so as the person abandoned by God becomes like him with whom she unites. As those who attach themselves to God are animated by His spirit, so those who follow the devil are urged by the spirit of the devil; and nothing can be more brutified than those whom God abandons."

"Whatever this poor lady did," said Ennasuite, "I cannot applaud those who boasted of their prison."

"It is my belief," said Longarine, "that a man finds it as hard to keep his good fortune secret as to pursue it. There is no hunter who does not take pleasure in blowing his horn over his quarry, or lover who is not very glad to proclaim the glory of his victory."

"That is an opinion," said Simontault, "which I will maintain to be heretical before all the inquisitors in the world; for I lay it down as a fact that there are more men than women who keep a secret. I know, indeed, that some might be found who would rather not be so well treated than that any one in the world should know of it. Thence it is that the Church, as a good mother, has appointed priests and not women for confessors, for women can conceal nothing."

"That is not the reason," replied Oisille, "but because women have such a hatred of vice, that they would not give

velles of the Queen of Navarre, who had three lovers at once, and was so clever that she managed to entertain them all three very affably.'—(*Dame Galantes*, Discours iv.) As for the principal hero, the name of *Hastillon*, by which he is designated, warrants us in making a conjecture. May he not have been Jacques de Chastillon, chamberlain of Charles VIII. and Louis XII., and lieutenant of the hundred gentlemen of Charles VIII., who was killed at the siege of Ravenna in 1512? Brantôme has devoted to him the nineteenth Discours of his work on *Les Capitaines Français*.—*Bibliophiles Français*.

absolution so easily as men, and would impose too severe penances."

"If they were as austere in imposing penance as they are in responding," said Dagoucin, "they would render more sinners desperate than they would save. The Church, therefore, has ordained wisely in all ages. I do not pretend, for all that, to excuse the gentlemen who boasted of their prison; for it never was to a man's honor to tell ugly tales of a woman."

"Nay," said Geburon, "for the sake of their own honor even they should never have avowed the fact. The books of the Round Table inform us that it is not glorious for a knight to vanquish another who has no valor."

"I am surprised the poor woman did not die of shame in presence of her prisoners," said Longarine.

"Those who have lost shame can hardly ever recover it," said Oisille, "unless they have lost it through deep love. Of such lost ones I have seen many come back."

"I suspect you have seen them come back as they came," said Hircan, "for deep love is very rare in women."

"I am not of your opinion," said Longarine, "for some I know have loved to death."

"I am so curious to hear a story of one such woman," said Hircan, "that my voice is for you. I shall be very glad to find in women a love of which I have always deemed them incapable."

"You will believe it when you have heard the story," said Longarine, "and you will be convinced that there is no stronger passion than love. As it makes one undertake things almost impossible, with a view to obtain some pleasure in this life, so does it above all other passions undermine the existence of him or her who loses the hope of succeeding, as you shall see from what I am going to relate."

NOVEL L.

A lover, after a blood-letting, receives favors from his mistress, dies in consequence, and is followed by the fair one, who sinks under her grief.

It is not a year ago since there was in Cremona a gentleman named Messire Jean Pierre, who had long loved a lady in his neighborhood ; but for all he could do he had never been able to obtain from her the response he longed for, though she loved him with all her heart. The poor gentleman was so distressed at this, that he secluded himself at home, resolving to abandon a vain pursuit in which he was wasting his life. Thinking to detach himself from his cruel fair one, he remained some days without seeing her, and fell into such a profound melancholy, that no one would have known him, so altered were his looks. His relations sent for physicians, who, seeing his face yellow, thought it was an obstruction of the liver, and bled him. The lady who had been so coy, knowing very well that his illness was nothing but grief that she had not responded to his love, sent a trusty old woman with orders to tell him, that as she could no longer doubt that his love was genuine and sincere, she had made up her mind to grant him what she had so long refused ; and that to that end she had contrived means to leave home and go to a place where he might see her without impediment.

The gentleman, who had been let blood that morning from the arm, finding himself more relieved by this embassy than by all the remedies of his physicians, sent her word that he would not fail to meet her at the appointed hour, and that she had performed a manifest miracle, inasmuch as by a single word she had cured a man of a malady for which all the faculty could find no remedy. The evening he so longed for being come, he went to the trysting-place with a joy so extreme, that as it could not augment, could not of necessity but diminish and come to an end. He had not long to wait for her he loved more than his soul ; nor did he waste time in making long speeches. The fire that consumed him made him rush promptly to the pleasure he promised himself, and which he could

hardly believe was within his reach. Too much intoxicated with love and voluptuous delight, and thinking he had found the remedy that would prolong his life, he found that which hastened his death; for heedless of himself in his ardent passion for his mistress, he did not perceive that his arm had come unbound. The wound opened afresh, and the poor gentleman lost so much blood, that he was quite bathed in it. Believing that the excess he had indulged in was the cause of his lassitude, he attempted to return home. Then love, which had too much united them, so dealt with him, that on quitting his mistress, his soul at the same time quitted his body. He had lost so much blood that he fell dead at the lady's feet.

The awful surprise, and the thought of what she lost in so perfect a lover, of whose death she was the sole cause, put her beside herself. Reflecting, besides, on the shame that would devolve on her if a dead body was found in the house with her, she called to her aid a trusty woman servant, and they carried the body into the street. But not choosing to leave it alone, she took the sword of the deceased, and being resolved to follow his destiny, and punish her heart, which was the cause of her calamity, she pierced herself with the sword, and fell dead on her lover's body. That sad spectacle was the first thing that met the eyes of her father and mother when they came out of their house in the morning. After the lamentations due to so tragic an event, they had them both interred together.

This, ladies, was an extreme disaster, which could only be ascribed to a love as extreme.

"That is what I like to see," said Simontault; "a love so reciprocal, that when the one dies the other will not survive. Had I, by God's grace, found such a mistress, I believe that no man would ever have loved more perfectly than I."

"I am sure," said Parlamente, "that love would never have so deprived you of your wits but that you would have taken care to tie up your arm better. Men no longer lose their lives for ladies. That time is gone by."

"But the time is not gone by," retorted Simontault, "when ladies forget their lovers' lives for sake of their own pleasure."

"I do not believe," said Ennasuite, "that there is a woman in the world who would take delight in any man's death, though he were her enemy; but if men choose to kill themselves, the ladies cannot hinder them."

"She, however, who refused bread to the poor famishing man," said Saffredent, "must be regarded as his murderess."

"If your prayers were as reasonable as those of the beggar who asks for bread," said Oisille, "it would be too cruel on the part of the ladies to deny your petition. But, thank Heaven, this malady kills none but those whose time is come."

"I cannot think, madam," replied Saffredent, "that there is any greater need than that one which makes a man forget all others. When one loves well, one knows no other bread than the glances and the words of the beloved being."

"If you were starved for a while, you would tell a very different story," said Oisille.

"I confess," he replied, "that the body might grow weak under that discipline, but not the heart and the will."

"That being the case," said Parlamente, "God has been very gracious to you in making you fall into the hands of women who have given you so little satisfaction, that you must console yourself for it by eating and drinking. You take so kindly to that sort of consolation, that methinks you ought to thank God for that merciful cruelty."

"I am so inured to suffering," he replied, "that I begin to take pleasure in the ills which others bemoan."

"It may be," said Longarine, "that your lamentations exclude you from the company to which you would otherwise be welcome; for there is nothing so disagreeable as an importunate lover."

"Or as a cruel lady, you may add," said Simontault.

"If we were to wait till Simontault had delivered all his maxims," said Oisille, "I see that we should come in for complines instead of vespers. Let us, then, go and thank God that this day has passed without any dispute of more consequence."

She then rose, and was followed by all the rest; but Simontault and Longarine ceased not to dispute, but so gently that, without drawing the sword, Simontault gained the victory, and proved that there is no greater need than a great passion.

SIXTH DAY.

*On the Sixth Day are related the deceits practiced
by Men on Women, Women on Men, or
Women on Women, through
greed, revenge, and
wickedness.*

Thereupon they entered the church, where the monks were waiting for them. After vespers they went to table, and conversed during the repast; nor did the conversation end with it, but would have been prolonged far into the night if Oisille had not advised them to go and refresh their spirits with sleep. She added, that she was afraid the sixth day would not pass off so agreeably as the five others, for even if they should have recourse to invention, it would be impossible to produce better tales than those which had been already told.

"As long as the world lasts," said Geburon, "there will every day be done things worthy of memory. The wicked are always wicked, and the good always good: and as long as wickedness and goodness reign on earth, something new will always be taking place, although Solomon says that nothing new happens under the sun. As we have not been called to the privy council of God, and consequently are ignorant of first causes, all things seem new to us, and the more wonderful the less we could or would do them. So do not be afraid that the days to come will not be as good as the past, and think only of doing your own duty well."

Oisille said she commended herself to God, in whose name she bade them good night. And so the whole company retired.

SIXTH DAY.

NEXT morning, earlier than usual, Madame Oisille went to prepare her exhortation in the hall; but the rest of the company being informed of this, their desire to hear her good instructions made them dress so speedily, that she was not kept waiting long. As she knew their hearts, she read the epistle of St. John, which speaks only of love. This was so palatable to the company, that although this morning's devotion was longer than usual, they all thought it had not occupied more than a quarter of an hour. After it was over they went to mass, and commended themselves to the Holy Ghost. When they had dined and taken a little rest they went to the

meadow to continue their novels. Madame Oisille asked who should begin the day. "I call upon you to do so, madam," said Longarine, "for you gave us such a fine lecture this morning, that it is impossible you should tell a story which should not correspond to the glory you acquired thereby."

"I regret," replied Oisille, "that I cannot relate anything to you so profitable as what you heard this morning. What I shall tell you, however, will be conformable to the precepts of the Scriptures, which warn us not to put our trust in princes, or in any sons of man, who cannot save us. For fear you should forget this truth for want of an example, I will give you one that is quite true, and so recent, that those who beheld the sad spectacle have hardly yet dried away their tears."

NOVEL LI.

Perfidy and cruelty of an Italian Duke.

THE Duke of Urbino, surnamed the Prefect, who married the sister of the first Duke of Mantua, had a son about eighteen or twenty years of age, who was in love with a girl of good family. Not being free to converse with her as he wished, in consequence of the custom of the country, he had recourse to a gentleman who was in his service, and who was in love with a handsome, virtuous young damsel in the service of the duchess. The cavalier employed this damsel to make known his passion to his mistress, and the poor girl took pleasure in rendering him service, believing that his intentions were good, and that she might with honor take upon her to be his ambassadress. But the duke, who looked more to the interest of his house than to his son's pure affection, was afraid that this correspondence would end in marriage; and he set so many spies on the watch, that at last he was informed that the girl had meddled with carrying letters from his son to her of whom he was so passionately enamored. Burning with rage, he resolved to put it out of his power to do so any more; but as he was not sufficiently careful to conceal his resentment,

the girl was warned of it in time. She knew the prince to be malicious and without conscience, and was so terrified, that she went to the duchess, and implored permission to retire until the fit of anger had passed away. The duchess told her that before she gave her leave she would try to find how her husband took the matter. She did so, and found that the duke spoke of it with great bitterness; whereupon she not only gave her young lady permission, but even advised her to retire into a convent until the storm should have blown over; and this she did as secretly as possible.

The duke, however, missed her, and asked his wife, with a countenance of feigned good humor, where the damsel was. The duchess, who supposed that he knew the truth, told it him without reserve. He pretended to be sorry for this, and said there was no need for her to do so, that he meant her no harm, and that the duchess had better make her come back, for it did no good to have a talk made about such matters. The duchess told him that if the poor girl had been so unfortunate as to incur his displeasure, it was better that she should abstain from appearing in his presence for some time; but he would not be so put off, but insisted on her return.

The duchess made known the duke's pleasure to the damsel; but the latter was not satisfied, and begged her mistress would excuse her from running such a risk, knowing as she did that her husband the duke was not so ready to grant forgiveness. The duchess, however, pledged her life and honor that no harm should happen to her; and the damsel, who felt sure that her mistress loved her, and would for no consideration deceive her, trusted to her promise, believing that the duke would never violate a promise made by his wife on her life and honor, and she returned to court. As soon as the duke was aware of this, he entered his wife's chamber: and the moment he set eyes upon the poor damsel, he ordered his gentlemen to arrest her, and take her to prison. The duchess, who had induced her to quit her asylum upon the faith of her word, was filled with horror, and throwing herself at her husband's feet, besought him, for his own honor and that of his house, not to do such an act. But no supplications she could make, no arguments she could urge, had power to soften his hard heart, or turn him from his stubborn purpose to be

revenged. Without answering his wife a word, he abruptly quitted the room, and without form of justice, forgetting God and the honor of his house, this cruel duke had the poor girl hanged.

I will not undertake to depict the indignation of the duchess ; enough to say that it was such as might have been expected of a lady of honor and spirit, who, contrary to her plighted faith, saw a person whom she would have saved, put to death by her husband. Much less will I attempt to portray the affliction of the poor gentleman, the unfortunate girl's lover. He did all he could to save his mistress's life, and even offered to die in her place ; but nothing could move the duke, who knew no other felicity than taking vengeance on those he hated. Thus was this poor innocent put to death by this cruel duke, against all equity and honor, to the great regret of all who knew her.

Here you see, ladies, what a bad heart is capable of when it is united with power.

"I have heard," said Longarine, "that the Italians were prone to all capital vices ; but I could never have supposed they would carry vindictiveness and cruelty so far as to put a person to such a miserable death for so slight a cause."

"You have mentioned one of the three vices," said Saffredent, laughing ; "let us know, Longarine, what are the other two."

"I would do so willingly," she replied, "if you did not know them ; but I am sure you are acquainted with them all."

"You think me, then, very vicious?" said Saffredent.

"Not at all," returned Longarine ; "but I believe you know so well the loathsomeness of vice, that you can better avoid it than another."

"Do not be surprised at this excess of cruelty," said Simon-tault, "for they who have been in Italy relate such horrible things of the kind, that what we have heard is but a trifle in comparison with them."

"When the French took Rivolte," said Geburon, "there was an Italian captain who had the reputation of a brave man, and who, seeing a man lie dead who was not otherwise his enemy than in having been a Guelph whilst he was a Ghibel-

line, tore out his heart, broiled it, ate it greedily, and replied to those who asked him was it good, that he had never eaten anything more delicious. Not content with this fine deed, he killed the dead man's wife, who was pregnant, ripped her open, tore out the child, and dashed it to pieces against the wall; and then stuffed the bodies of the husband and wife with oats for his horses to eat. Judge if this man would not have put to death a girl whom he suspected of having done anything offensive to him."

"This duke," said Ennasuite, "was more afraid his son should marry one who was not wealthy enough, than desirous of giving him a wife to his liking."

"There is no doubt," said Simontault, "that the tendency of the Italians is to love more than nature the things that are only made for nature's service."

"Their case is still worse," said Hircan, "for they make their God of things that are contrary to nature."

"Those are the sins I meant," said Longarine; "for we know that to love money beyond what is necessary for our wants is idolatry."

Parlamente said that "St. Paul had not forgotten their vices, no more than those of such as think themselves surpassing in prudence and human reason, on which they count so much, that they do not render to God the honor that is His due. Therefore, the Almighty, jealous of His glory, renders more insensate than the brute beasts those who think they have more sense than other men, and allows them to do acts contrary to nature, which shows evidently that their sense is reprobate."

"That is the third sin," said Longarine, interrupting her, "to which the Italians are addicted."

"In good sooth, I like this remark," said Nomerfide. "Since those who are regarded as having the subtlest wits, and are the best speakers, are punished in this manner, and brutified more than the brutes themselves, it must be concluded that persons who are humble and low and of little reach like myself, are endowed with angelic sapience."

"I assure you," said Oisille, "I am not far from your way of thinking; and I am persuaded that there are none more ignorant than those who imagine themselves knowing."

"I never knew a mocker who was not mocked," said Geburon, "a deceiver who was not deceived, or a proud man who was not humbled."

"You put me in mind of a trick I should like to relate to you if it was seemly," said Simontault.

"Since we are here to tell the truth, tell it, whatever it be," said Oisille.

"Well, since you desire it, madam, I will tell it you," he replied.

NOVEL LII.

A nasty breakfast given to an advocate and a gentleman by an apothecary's man.

IN the time of the last Duke Charles there was at Alençon an advocate named Antoine Bacheret, a merry companion, and fond of breakfasting o' mornings. One day, as he was sitting before his door, he saw a gentleman pass whose name was Monsieur de la Tireliere. He had come on foot upon business he had in town, and the day being cold, he had not forgotten to take with him his great robe, lined with foxskin. Seeing the advocate, who was much such a man as himself, he asked him how he was getting on, and observed that a good breakfast would not be amiss. The advocate replied that a breakfast would be found soon enough, provided some one could be found to pay for it. Thereupon La Tireliere took him by the arm, saying, "Come along, gaffer, perhaps we shall fall in with some fool who will pay for us both."

There happened to be behind them an apothecary's man, a cunning and inventive young fellow, whom the advocate was perpetually making game of. That moment the thought of having his revenge came into his head, and without going more than ten steps out of his way, he found behind a house a fine big sir reverence, well and duly frozen, which he wrapped up so neatly in paper that it might be taken for a small sugar-loaf. He then looked out for his men, and passing them like a person in great haste, entered a house, and let fall the sugar-loaf

from his sleeve, as if inadvertently. The advocate picked it up with great glee, and said to La Tireliere, "This clever fellow shall pay our scot ; but let us be off quickly for fear he comes back."

The pair having entered a cabaret, the advocate said to the servant girl, "Make us a good fire, and give us some good bread and good wine, and something nice with it ;" for he fancied he had wherewithal to pay. They were served to their liking ; but as they grew warm with eating and drinking, the sugar-loaf, which the advocate carried in his bosom, began to thaw, and gave out such a stench that, thinking it came from elsewhere, he said to the servant, "You have the most fetid and stinking house I ever was in." La Tireliere, who had his share of this fine perfume, said the same thing. The servant, incensed at thus being accused of sluttishness, replied, "By St. Peter, my masters, the house is so neat and clean that there is no nastiness in it but what you have brought in with you." The two friends rose from table, spitting and holding their noses, and stood near the fire ; and presently, while warming himself, the advocate took his handkerchief out of his bosom, disgustingly smeared with the syrup of the melted sugar-loaf, which he produced with it. You may well believe that the servant made fine fun of them after the insult they had offered her, and that the advocate was sorely confounded at finding himself the dupe of an apothecary's man, whom he had always made the butt of his wit. The servant, instead of taking pity on them, made them pay as handsomely as they had been served ; and said that no doubt they must be greatly intoxicated, since they had drunk both by nose and mouth. The poor wights slunk away with their shame and their cost.

They were no sooner in the street than they saw the apothecary's man going about and asking every one if they had seen a loaf of sugar wrapped up in paper. They tried to avoid him, but he shouted to the advocate, "Monsieur, if you have my loaf of sugar I beg you will give it back to me ; for it is a double sin to rob a poor servant." His shouts brought many people to the spot out of curiosity to witness the dispute ; and the real state of the case was so well verified, that the apothecary's man was as glad to have been robbed as the others were vexed at having committed such a nasty theft. They com-

forted themselves, however, with the hope of one day giving him tit for tat.

The like often happens, ladies, to those who take pleasure in such tricks. If the gentleman had not wanted to eat at another's expense, he would not have had such a nasty draught at his own. It is true that my story is not very decorous, but you gave me permission to speak the truth. I have done so, to show that when a deceiver is deceived no one is sorry for it.

"It is commonly said that words do not stink," said Hircan; "but those who utter them cannot help smelling of them."

"It is true," said Oisille, "that words of this sort do not stink; but there are others called dirty, which have such a bad odor, that the soul suffers from them more than the body would suffer from smelling a sugar-loaf like that you have spoken of."

"Do tell me, pray," rejoined Hircan, "what words you know so dirty, that they make a woman of honor suffer both in body and soul."

"It would be a fine thing," replied Oisille, "if I were to say to you words which I would not advise any woman to say."

"I understand now what those words are," said Saffredent. "Women like to appear demure, and do not commonly use such language. But I should like to ask those present why they laugh so readily when they are uttered before them, since they will not themselves utter them. I cannot understand their laughing at a thing which is so offensive to them."

"It is not at those pretty words we laugh," said Parla-mente, "but by reason of the natural propensity every one feels to laugh either when we see some one fall, or when we hear something said out of place, as it often happens to the best speakers to say one thing instead of another. But when men talk filth intentionally, and with premeditation, I know no honorable woman but feels intense aversion for such people, and, far from listening to them, shuns their society."

"It is true," said Geburon, "that I have seen women cross themselves on hearing that sort of words which seemed more disgusting the more they were repeated."

"But," said Simontault, "how often have they put on their

masks to laugh behind them as heartily as they pretended to be vexed? "

"Even that were better than to show that one took pleasure in such language," said Parlamente.

"So, then," remarked Dagoucin, "you praise hypocrisy in ladies as much as virtue? "

"Virtue would be much better," replied Longarine; "but when it is wanting, we must have recourse to hypocrisy, as we use high-heeled shoes to hide our littleness. If we can hide our defects, even that is no little advantage."

"By my faith, it would be better sometimes to let some little defect appear," said Hircan, "than to hide it so carefully under the cloak of virtue."

"It is true," said Ennasuite, "that a borrowed garment dishonors him who is obliged to return it, as much as it did him honor to wear it. There is a lady in the world who, in her over-anxiety to hide a small fault, has committed a much greater one."

"I think I know whom you mean," said Hircan; "but at least do not name her."

"O! you have my voice," said Geburon, "on condition that when you have told the tale, you will tell us the names, which we will swear never to mention."

"I promise it," said Ennasuite, "for there is nothing which may not be said decorously."

NOVEL LIII.

Madame de Neufchastel, by her dissimulation, forced the Prince of Belhoste to put her to such a proof as turned to her dishonor.

ON one occasion, when King Francis I. went with but a small suite to spend some days at a very handsome château, to enjoy the chase and other recreations, he was accompanied by the Prince of Belhoste, as much distinguished for every excellence of mind and person as any at court. He had married a wife who was not of a great family, but whom he loved as much as any husband can love a wife. He put such confi-

dence in her, that when he loved elsewhere he made no secret of it to her, well knowing that she had no other will than his. This lord conceived a strong regard for a widow named Madame de Neufchastel, who was considered the handsomest woman of her time. If the prince was greatly attached to this widow, the princess his wife was no less so, often invited her to table, and thought so highly of her, that far from being displeased that her husband loved her, she was delighted to see that he addressed his attentions to so worthy and virtuous an object. This friendship was of such long duration, and so perfect, that the prince busied himself with Madame de Neufchastel's affairs as much as with his own, and the princess his wife did likewise.

The widow's beauty attracted round her many great lords and gentlemen as suitors, some of whom were actuated only by love, others had an eye to her wealth; for, in addition to her beauty, she was very rich. One gentleman especially, named the Seigneur des Cheriots, was so assiduous in his wooing, that he never failed to present himself at her *lever* and her *coucher*, and spent as much time in her society as he possibly could. The prince, who thought that a man of such mean birth and appearance did not deserve to be treated so favorably, was not at all pleased with his assiduities, and often remonstrated with the widow on the subject; but as she was a duke's daughter, she excused herself, saying that she talked generally to everybody, and that their intimacy would be the less observed when it was seen that she did not talk more to one than another. After some time, this Sieur des Cheriots pressed his suit so much, that she promised to marry him, more in consequence of his importunity than of her preference for him, on condition that he would not require her to declare the marriage until her daughters were married. After this promise, the gentleman used to go to her chamber without scruple, at any hour he pleased; and there was only a femme-de-chambre and a man who were privy to the affair.

The prince was so displeased at seeing the gentleman becoming more and more domesticated with her he loved, that he could not help saying to her, "I have always prized your honor as that of my own sister. You know with what propriety I have always addressed you, and what pleasure I feel

in loving a lady so discreet and virtuous as you ; but if I thought that another obtained by importunity what I would not ask for against your inclination, I could not endure it, nor would it do you honor. I say this to you because you are young and fair, and have hitherto enjoyed a good reputation ; but you are beginning to be the subject of reports greatly to your disadvantage. Though this person has neither birth, fortune, credit, knowledge, nor good looks in comparison with you, it would have been better, nevertheless, that you had married him than have given rise to suspicion, as you are doing. Tell me, then, I entreat, if you are resolved to love him ; for I do not choose to have him for a companion, but will leave you wholly to him, and will no longer entertain for you the sentiments I have hitherto cherished."

The poor lady, fearing to lose his friendship, began to cry, and vowed to him that she would rather die than marry the gentleman in question ; but that he was so importunate that she could not hinder his entering her room at the hours when every one else visited her. "I do not speak of those hours," said the prince, "for I can visit you then as well as he, and every one sees what you do ; but I have been told that he comes to you after you are in bed, which I think so bad, that if you continue it without declaring that he is your husband, I look upon you as the woman most ruined in reputation that ever was."

She assured him with all the oaths she could think of that she regarded the man neither as husband nor lover, but as the most importunate person in the world. "Since that is the case," said the prince, "I promise that I will rid you of him."

"What !" replied the widow, "would you put him to death ?"

"No, no," said the prince ; "but I will let him know that he must not give occasion in this way for people to speak ill of ladies in the king's residence. I swear to you, by the love I bear you, that if he does not correct himself after I have spoken to him, I will correct him in such a manner that he shall be an example for others."

With these words the prince went away, and on leaving the room he met the Seigneur des Cheriots coming thither, and

spoke to him to the same purpose, assuring him that the first time he found him there at any other hour than one in which it was proper for gentlemen to visit ladies, he would give him such a fright as he should not forget as long as he lived, and would teach him not to trifle with a lady whose relations were persons of such consequence. The gentleman protested that he had never been there except like other visitors; and that if the prince found him transgressing in that respect he would give him leave to do the worst he could.

Some days afterwards, the gentleman, fancying that the prince had forgotten what he had told him, went to see the lady in the evening, and stayed very late. The prince told his wife that Madame de Neufchastel had a severe cold, and the good lady begged him to go see her for them both, and apologize for her, as she was prevented from accompanying him by indispensable business. The prince waited till the king was in bed, and then went to say good evening to the widow. He had just reached the foot of the staircase, and was about to go up, when he met a valet de chambre coming down, who swore, in reply to the prince's questions, that his mistress was in bed and asleep. The prince retraced his steps, but presently, suspecting that the valet had told a lie, he looked back and saw the man returning hastily. He stopped, therefore, and walked up and down the yard before the door to watch if the valet reappeared, and a quarter of an hour afterwards he saw him come down, and peer about in all directions to see who was in the yard. The prince entertaining no doubt now that the Seigneur des Cheriots was with the widow, and durst not come out for fear of him, continued his promenade for a long while. Recollecting that one of the lady's chamber windows looked upon a little garden, and was not very high, he called to mind the proverb which says, "Whoso cannot pass through the door let him jump through the window." He therefore called one of his valets and said, "Go into that garden, and if you see a gentleman come down from a window, draw your sword, and the moment he is down, make your sword clash upon the wall, and shout, 'Kill! kill!' but do not touch him." The valet went to where his master ordered him, and the prince walked up and down till near midnight.

The Seigneur des Cheriots hearing that the prince was still

in the yard, resolved to escape by the window, and throwing his cloak into the garden he followed it with the help of his good friends. The valet no sooner espied him than he made a great clatter with his sword, and shouted, "Kill him, kill him!" The poor gentleman, mistaking the valet for the master, was so frightened, that, without stopping to pick up his cloak, he ran off as fast as his legs could carry him, and was met by the archers of the watch, who were greatly surprised to see him running so. He durst not say anything else to them than to beg earnestly they would open the gate for him, or take him to their quarters till the next day; which they did, not having the keys.

Then it was that the prince went to bed. He found his wife asleep, woke her, and asked her to guess what o'clock it was. "I have not heard the clock strike since I came to bed," said she.

"It is past three o'clock," said he.

"Good Heavens! monsieur, where have you been staying so long?" exclaimed the wife. "I am afraid you will be the worse for it."

"Watching will never make me ill, my dear," he replied, "so long as I keep those awake who think to deceive me." And so saying, he laughed so heartily that she begged him to tell her what it was for. He told her the whole story, and showed her the wolf's skin, which his valet had carried home with him. After they had diverted themselves at the expense of the widow and her gallant, they went to sleep with as much composure as the other pair felt fear and uneasiness lest their intrigue should be discovered.

Now the gentleman, reflecting that he could not dissemble before the prince, came to his levee next morning, and besought the prince not to expose him, and to order his cloak to be restored to him. The prince pretended not to understand him, and played his part so well that the poor gentleman did not know what to make of it. But at last he received such a rating as he had not expected; for the prince assured him that if ever he was found there again, he would speak to the king and have him banished from the court.

Judge, ladies, I pray you, if this poor widow would not have

done better to speak frankly to him who did her the honor to love and esteem her, than by her dissimulation to reduce him to the necessity of seeking evidence so dishonoring to herself.

"She knew," said Geburon, "that if she told him the truth she would wholly lose his esteem, which she wished to preserve by all means."

"It strikes me," said Longarine, "that since she had chosen a husband to her liking, she had no reason to care for losing the love of all her other admirers."

"I believe," said Parlamente, "that if she had ventured to declare her marriage she would have contented herself with her husband ; but wishing to conceal it until her daughters were married, she could not make up her mind to let go so good a means of cloaking her real sentiments and conduct."

"That is not it," said Saffredent ; "but the fact is, that the ambition of women is so great, that they never content themselves with one lover. I have heard that the best of them like to have three—one for honor, one for interest, and the third for pleasure ; and each of the three believes himself the most favored ; but the first two serve the last."

"You speak of women who know neither love nor honor," said Oisille.

"There are women, madam, of the character I describe, whom you regard as the most virtuous women in the country," replied Saffredent.

"Rely upon it," said Hircan, "that a clever woman will always contrive to live where others would die of hunger."

"But when their slyness is known their case is mortal," said Longarine.

"Nay, they thrive all the better for it," said Simontault. "It is no small glory for them to be reputed more cunning than their companions. Such a reputation brings more lovers under subjection to them than does their beauty. In fact, one of the greatest pleasures known to lovers is to conduct their amours silyly."

"You are speaking of criminal love," said Ennasuite ; "for lawful love has no need of concealment."

"Put that notion out of your head, I beseech you," said Dagoucin, "for the more precious a drug is the less it should be exposed to the air. Secrecy is necessary whether one loves

virtuously or the reverse ; and that for fear of false judgment on the part of those who cannot believe a man capable of loving a woman honorably. Such persons judge others by themselves ; and as they love their pleasure only they imagine that every one is like themselves. If we were all of good faith, dissimulation would be needless, at least with regard to those who would rather die than harbor a bad thought."

"I assure you, Dagoucin," said Hircan, "your philosophy is so sublime that there is not one person in this company who can compass or believe it. To hear you talk, one would say you meant to persuade us that men are either angels, or stones, or devils."

"I know well," replied Dagoucin, "that men are men, and subject to all the passions ; but I know that there are those among them who would rather die than for their pleasure the lady they love should do aught against her conscience."

"To say they would rather die is saying a great deal," said Geburon. "I could not believe it, though I were told it by the most austere monk in the world."

"I am disposed to believe," said Hircan, "there is no one whose desires do not run quite the other way. People pretend, however, not to like grapes when they are too high for them to reach."

"But," said Nomerfide, "I suppose the prince's wife was very glad that he came to know what women are."

"I assure you it was quite the reverse," said Ennasuite ; "she was very sorry for it, because she loved the widow."

"She was a match for the woman who laughed when her husband kissed her servant," said Saffredent.

"Decidedly, you shall tell us that story," said Ennasuite.

"It is short," he replied, "but it will make you laugh, which is better than being long."

NOVEL LIV.

A lady laughed to see her husband kissing her servant, and being asked the reason, replied that she laughed at her shadow.

THERE lived between the Pyrenees and the Alps a gentleman named Thogas, who had a wife and children, a very fine house, and so much wealth and pleasure that he had great reason to be content. The only drawback to so many sources of enjoyment was a violent pain under the roots of the hair, on account of which the physicians advised him to desist from sleeping with his wife. To this she readily consented, preferring her husband's health and life before all things, and had her bed put at the other corner of the room, directly opposite her husband's, so that they could neither of them put their heads out without seeing each other. This lady had two chamber women. The husband and wife used often to read entertaining books in bed, the servant women holding the candle, the younger for the husband, and the other for the wife. The gentleman finding the servant younger and handsomer than his wife, took such pleasure in contemplating her, that he used to leave off reading to converse with her. His wife heard all, and was not displeased that her valets and her handmaids should amuse her husband, being sure that he loved none but herself.

ONE evening, after reading longer than usual, the lady looked along her husband's bed, and saw only the back of the servant who was holding the candle to him ; whilst of her husband she saw nothing but his shadow projected on the white wall forming the side of the chimney which jutted into the room. She perfectly distinguished the faces of both, and saw by their shadows, as clearly as she could have seen by the substance of each, if they were apart, or met, or laughed. The gentleman, who was not aware of this, and never supposed that his wife could see him, kissed his servant. For that time the wife said not a word ; but seeing that the shadows often repeated the same movement, she was afraid there was reality beneath it, and she burst into such a loud laugh that the shadows separated

in alarm. The gentleman asked her why she laughed so heartily, and begged she would let him have part in her merriment. "I am such a simpleton, my dear," she replied, "that I laugh at my shadow." Question her as he would, there was no getting any other answer from her. There was an end, however, to that shadowy dalliance.

I have been reminded of this incident by what you said of the lady who loved her husband's mistress.

"In faith," said Ennasuite, "if my servant had served me so, I would have got up and smashed the candle on her nose."

"You are very terrible," said Hircan; "but it would have been a bad business for you if your husband and the servant had turned round upon you and beaten you soundly. What need to make such a pother about a kiss? The wife would have done still better not to say a word, but leave her husband to divert himself. That would, perhaps, have cured him."

"Perhaps, on the contrary, she feared that the end of the diversion would make him worse," said Parlamente.

"She was not one of those of whom our Lord speaks," said Oisille, "when he says, 'We have mourned and you have not wept, we have sung and you have not danced,' for when her husband was ill she wept, and when he was merry she laughed. All good women ought thus to share with their husbands good and evil, joy and sorrow, and should love, serve, and obey them as the Church does Jesus Christ."

"Our husbands, madam," said Parlamente, "ought likewise to behave to us as Jesus Christ does to the Church."

"And so we do," said Saffredent; "and we would do something more if it were possible; for Jesus Christ died only once for his Church, and we die daily for our wives."

"Die?" exclaimed Longarine; "it strikes me that you and the rest of you here are worth more crowns than you were worth sous before you were married."

"I know why," said Saffredent. "It is because our worth is so often proved. Nevertheless, our shoulders feel the effects of having so long worn harness."

"If you had been constrained," retorted Ennasuite, "to wear harness for a month, and to lie on the bare ground you

would be very glad to get back to your good wife's bed and wear the harness of which you now complain. But they say that people can bear anything except ease, and that no one knows the value of repose until he has lost it."

"This good woman, who laughed when her husband was merry," said Oisille, "was glad to enjoy her repose under any circumstances."

"It is my belief," said Longarine, "that she loved her repose better than her husband, since nothing could move her, do what he might."

"She took to heart what might be injurious to his conscience and his health," said Parlamente; "but at the same time she was not a woman to make a fuss about trifles."

"You make me laugh when you talk of conscience," said Simontault. "That is a thing about which I would never have a woman make herself uneasy."

"You deserve," said Nomerfide, "to have a wife like her who plainly showed, after her husband's death, that she cared more for his money than his conscience."

"Pray tell us that tale," said Saffredent.

"I had not intended to tell so short a tale," replied Nomerfide; "but since it comes so *à propos*, you shall have it."

NOVEL LV.

Cunning device of a Spanish widow to defraud the Mendicant Friars of a testamentary bequest made to them by her husband.

THERE was at Saragossa a merchant who, feeling his end approach, and seeing that he must quit his possessions, which he had, perhaps, acquired with bad faith, thought to make satisfaction in part for his sins after his death by giving some little present to God, as if God gave his grace for money. After giving orders respecting his house, he desired that a fine Spanish horse, which constituted nearly the whole of his wealth, should be sold, and the money bestowed on the poor Mendicants; and he charged his wife to do this without fail imme-

diately after his death. The burial being over, and the first tears shed, the wife, who was no more of a simpleton than Spanish women are in general, said to the man-servant, who, like her, had heard her husband deliver his last will, "Methinks I lose enough in losing my husband, whom I so tenderly loved, without losing, also, the rest of my property. I would by no means, however, contravene the orders he laid upon me, but would rather improve upon his intentions. The poor man, beguiled by the avarice of the priests, thought to make a sacrifice to God, in giving away after his death a sum, one crown of which he would not have given in his lifetime, however pressing might be the need, as you very well know; it has occurred to me, then, that we will do what he ordered us much better than he could have done it himself had he lived a few days longer, but no one in the world must know a word about it."

The man having promised to keep the secret, she continued: "You will take the horse to the market, and when you are asked the price you will say one ducat. But I have a very good cat which I want to sell also. You will sell it along with the horse, and charge for it ninety-nine ducats, making of the two one hundred ducats, which is the price at which my husband wished to sell the horse alone."

The man promptly obeyed his mistress's orders. As he was walking the horse about in the market-place, carrying the cat under his arm, a gentleman who knew the horse, and had before wished to buy it, came up and asked what he would take for it at a word. "A ducat," said the man.

"I would thank you not to make game of me," said the gentleman.

"I assure you, sir," said the man, "it will cost you more. It is true you must buy this cat at the same time, and I want ninety-nine ducats for it."

The gentleman, who thought it a pretty good bargain, paid him forthwith a ducat for the horse, and then the remainder for the cat, and had his two purchases taken home. The man on his side went off with the money to his mistress, who was delighted to get it, and failed not to bestow on the poor Mendicants, according to her husband's intentions, the ducat for which the horse had been sold, and kept the rest to provide for her own wants and those of her family.

Don't you think she was wiser than her husband, and did she not take more care of the fortune of her family than of his conscience?

"I believe she loved her husband," said Parlamente; "but seeing that most men wander in their wits on their death-bed, and knowing his intentions, she interpreted them to the advantage of her children; and in this, I think, she showed laudable prudence."

"Do you not think it a great fault," said Geburon, "to contravene the last wishes of our deceased friends?"

"A very great one," replied Parlamente, "when the testator is in his sound senses, and not raving."

"Do you call it raving," returned Geburon, "to bequeath one's property to the Church and to the poor Mendicants?"

"I do not call it raving," she answered, "to give to the poor what God has given to us; but to give away as alms what belongs to another appears to me no great proof of good sense. How commonly you see the greatest usurers in the world erecting the finest and most sumptuous chapels, as thinking to make their peace with God for a hundred thousand ducats' worth of robbery by ten thousands ducats' worth of building, just as though God did not know how to count."

"Truly, I have often wondered," said Oisille, "how they think to make their peace with God by means of things which he himself reprobated when he was on earth, such as great buildings, gildings, painting, and decorations. But if they rightly understood what God has said, that the only offering he requires of us is a humble and contrite heart, and another text in which St. Paul says that we are the temple of God in which he desires to dwell, they would have taken pains to adorn their consciences while they were alive, and not have waited for the time when a man can no longer do either good or ill; nor would they have done what is still worse, in laying upon those they leave behind the burden of giving their alms to those they would not have deigned to look upon all through their lives. But He who knows the heart cannot be deceived, and will judge them not according to their works merely, but according to the faith and charity that was in them."

"Wherefore is it, then," said Geburon, "that these Cordeliers and Mendicants talk to us of nothing at death but

making great bequests to their monasteries, assuring us that they will put us into Paradise, whether we will or not?"

"How now, Geburon," said Hircan; "have you forgotten the wickedness you have related to us of the Cordeliers, that you ask how it is possible for such men to lie? I declare to you I do not think there are in the world greater lies than theirs. It may be that those among them are not to be blamed who speak on behalf of their whole community; but there are many of them who forget their vow of poverty to gratify their own avarice."

"It strikes me, Hircan," said Nomerfide, "that you know of some such case; if it is worthy of this company, I beg you will tell it us."

"I will do so," he replied, "although I dislike speaking of such people, for methinks they are of that class of whom Virgil says to Dante, 'Pass on, and heed them not.' However, to show you that they have not laid aside their passions with their mundane garments, I will tell a thing that happened."*

NOVEL LVI.

A pious lady having asked a Cordelier to provide a good husband for her daughter, he marries another Cordelier to the young lady, and possesses himself of her dowry—the cheat is discovered and punished.

A FRENCH lady who visited Padua heard that there was a Cordelier in the episcopal prison. Observing that every one talked and joked about him, she inquired the reason, and learned that this Cordelier was an old man, confessor to a very respectable and devout lady, who had been some years a widow, and had but one daughter, whom she loved so much that she spared no pains to amass wealth for her and procure

* The opinions expressed in this novel and epilogue were too bold for the first editors of the *Heptameron*, Boaistuau and Gruget, who altered some passages in the former, and substituted for the latter a much shorter epilogue, containing only common-place reflections on avarice, &c.

her a good match. As her daughter grew up, her whole thought was how to find her a husband who might live happily with them both ; that is to say, a conscientious person like herself. As she had heard it laid down by some stupid preacher that it was better to do wrong by the advice of the doctors of the Church than to do right trusting in the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, she applied to her confessor, an aged monk, who was a doctor of theology, and bore a blameless reputation throughout the town, never doubting but that she should secure her own peace and her daughter's through the advice and the prayers of the good father.

She besought him earnestly to choose a husband for her daughter—such a husband as he knew would be suitable to a girl who loved God and her honor. He told her he must first of all implore the grace of the Holy Spirit by fasting and prayer, and then, God lending him light, he hoped he should be able to find what he sought. Upon that he went away to ponder over the affair. As the mother had told him that she had five hundred ducats ready to hand over to her daughter's husband, and that she would maintain both husband and wife, and supply them with lodging, furniture, and clothes, he bethought him of a handsome strapping young brother of his order on whom he would bestow the pretty girl, the house, furniture, board, and clothing, while he himself would keep the five hundred ducats to assuage his burning covetousness. After he had talked with his man and arranged everything, he went to the mother and said to her : “ I believe, madam, that God has sent me his angel Raphael, as of old to Tobias, to enable me to find a spouse for your daughter. I have in my house the most respectable young gentleman in Italy, who has seen your daughter, and is deeply in love with her. When I was to-day at prayer, God sent him to me, and he declared how much he longs for this marriage ; and I, knowing his family and his relations, and that he comes of a notable race, promised to speak to you on the subject. I know but one inconvenience attending this match, which is, that wishing to save one of his friends whom another man would have slain, he drew his sword to part them ; but it happened that his friend killed the other ; in consequence of which, though he never struck a stroke, he is nevertheless a fugitive, because he

was present at the murder, and had drawn his sword. His parents have advised him to retire to this city, where he wears the dress of a student, and where he will remain incognito until this affair of his is arranged, which it is hoped it will be before long. You see, consequently, that it would be necessary for the marriage to be secret, and that you should not object to his going every day to the public lectures, and coming home in the evening to sup and sleep in your house."

"I see a great advantage to myself in what you tell me, sir," said the mother; "for at least I shall have by me what I desire most in the world."

The Cordelier produced the gallant in very good trim, and with a handsome doublet of crimson satin. He was so well received that the betrothal took place without more delay, and midnight had no sooner struck than mass was said, they were wedded and bedded, and remained together until day-break, when the bridegroom said to his bride, that, in order to maintain his incognito, he was obliged to leave her and go to the college. After putting on his crimson satin doublet and his long robe, not forgetting his black silk coif, he took leave of his wife, who was still in bed, and assured her that every evening he would come and sup with her, but that she must not expect him at dinner. Thereupon he went away, and left his wife the happiest woman in the world in her own esteem, for having met with so excellent a match. Away went the young Cordelier to the old father, and handed over the five hundred ducats, according to their previous agreement, and in the evening he returned to her who regarded him as her husband; nor did he fail to make himself so beloved by her and by his mother-in-law, that they would not have exchanged him for the greatest prince in the world.

This went on for some time; but as God has pity on those who honestly err, it came to pass that the mother and daughter had a mind to go hear mass at the church of the Cordeliers, and to pay a visit at the same time to the good father confessor through whose instrumentality they thought themselves so well provided, the one with a son-in-law, the other with a husband. Chance so ordained, that, not finding the confessor there, nor any one else they knew, they were content to hear

high mass, which was just beginning, whilst they awaited the confessor's arrival. The young wife attending closely to the divine service, was greatly surprised when the priest turned to say *Dominus vobiscum*, for she fancied she beheld her husband, or some one singularly resembling him. She said not a word, however, but waited till he appeared again, when she had a still better view of him than before, and no longer doubting that it was he, "Oh, mother!" she exclaimed, "what do I see?"

"What is it?" said the mother.

"My husband saying mass, or somebody the most like him in the world."

"Pray my dear," said the mother, who had not taken much notice of the priest, "don't let such a notion into your head. It is absolutely impossible that such pious men should practise such a cheat. It would be a great sin in you to believe any such thing."

For all that the mother did not fail to use her eyes, and when it came to saying *Ite Missa est*, she saw for certain that no twin brothers were ever more like each other. Nevertheless, so simple was she, that she would fain have said, "God preserve me from believing my eyes." However, as the matter was one which so deeply concerned her daughter, she determined to sift it to the bottom and know the truth. The husband, who had not perceived them, having returned home, she said to her daughter, "We shall now know the truth about your husband if you choose. When he is in bed I will come in, and you will pull off his coif from behind before he is aware of it. We shall see then if he is tonsured like the one who said mass."

So said, so done. The wicked husband was no sooner in bed than the old lady came in, and took him by both hands as if in play, whilst the daughter lifted up the back of his cap and discovered his fine shorn crown. Appalled at the sight, they instantly called in the domestics, who seized and bound him, and kept him fast till morning, in spite of all his excuses and fine words, which moved no one. Next morning the mother sent for her confessor, under pretence that she had some great secret to communicate to him. He came with speed, and had no sooner entered her doors than she had him

seized like the other, upbraiding him with the cheat he had put upon her. After this she committed them both into the hands of justice; and if the judges were honest men, it is not likely that this crime was left unpunished.

You see from this, ladies, that those who take the vow of poverty are not exempt from being tempted by avarice, and this is what leads them to the commission of so much mischief.

"Or rather of so much good," said Saffredent; "for how often did the monk make good cheer with the five hundred ducats which the old woman would have hoarded? Besides, the poor girl who had longed so much for a husband was put by his means into a condition to have two, and to judge the better of all hierarchies."

"You always entertain the falsest opinions I ever heard," said Oisille. This comes of your believing that the temperaments of all women are like your own."

"By your leave, madam, that is not it," said Saffredent; "and I would with all my heart that women could be as easily satisfied as men."

"That is a bad saying," replied Oisille, "for there is no one here but knows the very contrary, and that what you say is not true. The tale we have heard is a convincing proof of the ignorance of poor women, and the wickedness of those whom we regard as better than the generality of men; for neither the mother nor the daughter would do anything by themselves, but submitted to the advice of those whom they believed to be wise and good."

"There are women so hard to please," said Longarine, "that it seems as if nothing less than angels will suit them."

"Thence it comes," said Simontault, "that they often meet with devils; and especially those of them who, not trusting in God's grace, imagine that by their own good sense, or by that of others, they shall find in this world the felicity which can only come from God."

"Why, Simontault!" exclaimed Oisille, "I was not aware that you knew so much good."

"Madam," replied he, "it is a pity I am not much tried and proved, because, for want of being known to you, I see you have formed a bad opinion of me. I may fairly, however,

practise a Cordelier's trade, since a Cordelier has put his hand to mine."

"Then you call deceiving women your trade," said Parlamente; "thus, out of your own mouth, you condemn yourself."

"If I had deceived a hundred thousand of them," he returned, "I should not yet have revenged myself for the woes which one alone of their sex has made me endure."

"I know," retorted Parlamente, "that you complain perpetually of women; yet we see you so merry and in such good case, that there is no appearance of your having suffered as much as you say. But the Fair Lady without Mercy replies that 'it suits well to say so, by way of deriving some comfort from it.' " *

"You quote a notable doctor," said Simontault, "who is not only disagreeable, but makes all those ladies so who have read and followed his doctrine."

"Nevertheless, his doctrine is as profitable to young ladies as any I know," rejoined Parlamente.

"Were it come to that," said Simontault, "that the ladies were without mercy, we might well let our horses rest and our harness rust until the next war, and do nothing but think of household affairs. I pray you tell me, is it to a lady's credit that she should be without pity, charity, love, or compassion?"

"Without charity or love, no," replied Parlamente, "that she should not be, but that word compassion sounds so badly among women, that they cannot use it without wronging their honor. For what is this pity or compassion? It is properly granting the favor one asks for. Now we know well what is the favor men usually crave."

"With your good leave, madam," said Simontault, "some there are so moderate that the only favor they ask is liberty to speak."

"You remind me of one who was contented with a glove," said Parlamente.

"Let us know something about a lover who was so easy to deal with," said Hircan.

"I will tell you the tale with pleasure," she replied.

* A passage from Alain Chartier's poem, previously quoted in Novel XII.

NOVEL LVII.

Of a ridiculous milord who wore a lady's glove on his dress-coat.

KING LOUIS XI. sent Monsieur de Montmorency to England in the capacity of ambassador. He conducted himself so well there that he won the friendship of the king and all the other princes, and they even communicated to him many secret affairs on which they wished to have his advice. One day, when he was at an entertainment given by the king, he was seated beside a milord of high family, who wore, fastened to his doublet, a small glove such as women use. The glove was fastened with golden hooks, and the seams were adorned with such a great quantity of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls, that the value of the glove was something extraordinary. Monsieur de Montmorency cast his eyes on it so often, that the milord perceived he wished to ask him the reason of his magnificence; and, thinking the explanation would redound to his honor, he said to the ambassador, "I perceive, monsieur, that you are surprised I have so much enriched this poor glove; but I will tell you the reason. I look upon you as a gallant man, and I am sure you know what love is. You must know that I have all my life loved a lady whom I still love and shall love even after I am dead. As my heart was bolder to make a good choice than my tongue to declare it, I remained for seven years without daring even to show any signs of loving her, for fear, if she perceived them, I should lose the opportunities I had of being frequently with her—a thought which terrified me more than death. But one day, being in a meadow and gazing upon her, I was seized with such a palpitation of the heart that I lost all color and countenance. She having noticed this, and asked me what was the matter, I replied that I felt intolerably sick at heart. Thinking that this sickness was one in which love had no share, she expressed her pity for it; and that made me to entreat that she would put her hand on my heart, and see how it beat. She did so, more from charity than affection, and as I held her gloved hand on

my heart, its motions became so violent that she perceived I had spoken the truth. Then I pressed her hand on my bosom, and said to her, 'Receive this heart, madam, which struggles to escape from my bosom and put itself in the hands of her from whom I hope for grace, life, and pity. It is this heart, madam, which now constrains me to declare the love I have long cherished for you in secret, for neither my heart nor I, madam, can longer withstand so potent a god.' Surprised at so unexpected a declaration, she would have withdrawn her hand, but I held it so fast that her glove remained with me instead of that cruel hand. As I never had before or since any other approach to nearer intimacy with her, I placed this glove over my heart as the fittest plaister I could apply to it. I have enriched it with all the finest jewels in my possession; but what is dearer to me than all of them is the glove itself, which I would not give for the realm of England, for there is nothing I prize in the world so much as to feel it on my bosom."

The Seigneur de Montmorency, who would rather have had a lady's hand than her glove, highly extolled his gallantry, and told him he was the most genuine lover he had ever seen, and worthy of better treatment, since he set so much store by such a trifle. "But," said he, "there is some comfort even in ill luck, as the proverb says. You were so much in love, that if you had had something better than the glove you would perhaps have died of joy." The milord admitted this probability, without perceiving that Monsieur de Montmorency was making game of him.

If all the men in the world were of this character, the ladies might trust them, since it would cost them no more than a glove.

"I have been so well acquainted with Monsieur de Montmorency," said Geburon, "that I am sure he would not have been so easily satisfied as the Englishman, otherwise he would not have achieved so many successes as he did in love; for, as the old song says, 'Of a faint heart in love no one hears any good.'"

"You may be sure the poor lady withdrew her hand in great haste when she felt the great agitation of the heart," said

Saffredent. "She thought, no doubt, that the milord was about to expire ; and there is nothing, they say, which women abhor so much as to touch dead bodies."

"If you had frequented hospitals as much as taverns," said Ennasuite, "you would not say that ; for you would have seen women lay out dead bodies for burial, which men with all their boldness were often afraid to approach."

"It is true," said Simontault, "that there is no one on whom penance has been imposed who has not done the reverse of that which afforded him pleasure ; witness a lady I once saw in a distinguished house, who, to compensate for the pleasure she had taken in kissing a man she loved, was found at four o'clock in the morning kissing the dead body of a man who had been killed the preceding day, and for whom she had never had any especial love more than for another. Every one was then aware that she was doing penance for her past pleasures."

"This is just the way," said Oisille, "in which men poison all the good acts done by women. My opinion is that we ought to kiss neither the living nor the dead, except after the manner which God commands."

"For my part," said Hircan, "I care so little for kissing any other woman than my wife, that I willingly subscribe to any terms that may be made on the subject ; but I pity the young folk whom you would deprive of such a small gratification, annulling the precept of Saint Paul, who ordained that people should kiss *in osculo sancto*."

"If Saint Paul had been a man like you," said Nomerfide, "we should have demanded palpable evidence of the spirit of God which spoke in him."

"To the last you will rather doubt Holy Writ than give up a hair's breadth of one of your petty ceremonies," said Geburon.

"God forbid," replied Oisille, "that we should doubt Holy Writ, though we put little faith in your lies. There is no woman but knows that her proper creed consists in never doubting the Word of God, and always distrusting that of men."

"I believe," said Simontault, "that there are more men deceived by women than women deceived by men. Their

want of love for us hinders them from believing the truth; whilst we, on the contrary, love them to such excess, that we readily believe their falsehoods, and find ourselves their dupes before we have imagined the possibility of their duping us."

"I suppose," said Parlamente, "you have heard some fool complain of having been duped by some light woman. In fact, what you state carries so little weight with it, that it has need of being supported by some example. So, if you have one to adduce, let us hear it. I do not mean to say that we are bound to believe you; but it will not pain our ears to hear you malign us, for we know the truth of the matter."

"Well, that being so," said Simontault, "you shall be satisfied."

NOVEL LVIII.

How a lady of the court pleasantly revenged herself on her faithless lover.

THERE was at the court of Francis I. a lady of lively wit, who, by her beauty, her good breeding, and pleasing tongue, had won the hearts of several gentlemen, with whom she contrived to pass the time very well without exposing her honor, playing with them so pleasantly that they knew not on what to reckon; for the most confident were in despair, and the most despairing were not without hope. However, whilst making sport of most of them, she could not help greatly loving one of them, whom she called her cousin—a name which served as a pretext for a closer intimacy. But, as there is nothing stable in the world, their friendship often turned into anger, and then again became stronger than ever, in such wise that the whole court could not be ignorant of it. One day this lady, in order to let it be seen that she was passionless, as well as to tease him on account of whose love she had suffered much annoyance, showed him a more gracious countenance than ever she had done before. The gentleman, who was not deficient in boldness either in war or in love, began hotly to press the suit

he had often before addressed to her. She pretended she could no longer resist, granted what he asked, and told him that, in order to do so, she would go up to her chamber, which was on a garret-floor, where she knew there was nobody, and as soon as he saw her go, he was to follow her; and then, as she said, so graciously was she disposed towards him, that he would find her alone.

The gentleman believed her, and went with great delight to amuse himself with the other ladies, until he should see her depart. His fair one, who was not deficient in any of the sly ways of women, went up to Madame Margaret, the king's daughter, and the Duchess of Montpensier, and said to them, "I will show you, if you like, the finest sport you have ever seen." The princesses, who were no friends to melancholy, begged she would tell them what the sport was. "There is such a one, whom you both know," she said, "a charming man, if there ever was one, but the most audacious in the world. You know how many tricks he has played me; and you know, also, that when I loved him most he quitted me for others; which vexed me more than I suffered to appear. But now God has given me an opportunity to be revenged. I am now going to my room, which is overhead; and if you will watch, you will presently see him come up after me. When he shall have passed the galleries, and is about to ascend the stairs go both of you to the window, help me to cry 'Thief! thief!' and you will see what a rage he will be in. I am sure his anger will not become him badly; and if he does not openly abuse me, I am sure he will not fail to do so in his heart."

This plan was agreed on, not without much laughter beforehand; for there was no gentleman who waged war more on the ladies, all of whom loved and esteemed him so much, that for nothing in the world would they have exposed themselves to his raillery. As soon as the concocter of the plot had left them, the two princesses, who anticipated a large share in the glory which she was to win from the gentleman, set themselves on the watch, and when he went out they followed him into the gallery. There, suspecting nothing, he muffled himself in his cloak to hide his face, and descended the stairs to the court, but, seeing some one by whom he did not wish to be observed, he traversed the court and returned by another way,

all the while without perceiving the princesses, who saw all his movements. When he reached the staircase leading to the fair one's chamber, the princesses posted themselves at the window, and presently they heard the lady above crying "Thief! thief!" with all her might. The two princesses repeated the cry so loudly that they were heard all over the chateau. I leave you to imagine the vexation of the gentleman as he ran away, not so well muffled but that he was known by those who were in the secret. They often rallied him on the affair afterwards; nor did she who had played him the trick spare him, but told him to his face that she had well revenged herself. But he had such ready answers, and defended himself so cleverly, that he would have had them believe he had suspected their design, and that he had only promised to go to the lady to make sport of her in some way, assuring them he would never have given himself the trouble for her sake, for he had long ceased to love her. But the ladies would not own themselves defeated in that way, and the affair is still undecided.

If he really believed the lady, which is not probable, since he was so wary and so bold that few or no men of his age and time surpassed him, whereof his glorious death is good evidence, it strikes me that one cannot help admitting that gallant men who are in love are often the dupes of ladies from excess of credulity.*

"In faith," said Ennasuite, "I applaud the lady for what she did; for when a man loves a lady and quits her for another, she can never revenge herself too much."

* The Bibliophiles Français surmise that the Queen of Navarre has made herself the heroine of this novel. The doctrines she has several times laid down in her epilogues respecting love and the relations of courtesy between the sexes, are quite in harmony with what she there says respecting the *serviteurs* whom a lady may entertain without giving her husband any reason for suspicion. Nothing can be conjectured as to the name of the gallant on whom the trick was played.

In the following novel Margaret returns to the same subject, and relates how the same lady contrived to convict her husband of infidelity, and force him to take her to court, from which he had removed her through jealousy. If we compare this with what is known of Margaret's married life, the conjecture of her last editors appears so much the more plausible.

"True, if she is loved," said Parlamente; "but some there are who love without making sure they are loved; and when they perceive that their gallants love elsewhere, they accuse them of inconstancy. But women of discretion never suffer themselves to be thus deceived. They pay no heed to anything but the truth, for fear of being exposed to the irksome consequences of falsehood; for the true and the false talk the same language."

"If all women were of your way of thinking," said Simontault, "men might box up their supplications. But for all that you and others like you can say, we will never believe that women are as incredulous as they are fair. Under this conviction we will live as content as you would wish to render us uneasy by your maxims."

"As I very well know the lady who played this good trick," said Longarine, "I can have no difficulty in believing any slythings that may be attributed to her. Since she did not spare her own husband, it is not likely that she would spare her lover."

"What, her husband?" said Simontault. "Then you know more than I; so pray tell us what you know."

"I will, since you wish it," she replied.

NOVEL LIX.

The same lady, whose husband was jealous of her without just cause, contrives to detect him in such a position with one of her women that he is obliged to humble himself, and allow his wife to live as she pleases.

THE lady of whom you told the tale was married to a man of good and ancient family, whose fortune was not inferior to his birth. Their marriage was solely the result of their mutual love. The wife, who was of all women in the world the most ingenuous, made no secret of it to her husband that she had lovers, whom she made game of, and only used for her pastime. Her husband had his share in this pleasure; but in the long run he grew dissatisfied with this manner of proceeding. On

the one hand he took it amiss that she had long visits from persons he regarded neither as relations nor as friends, and on the other he was not pleased with the expenditure he was compelled to make in attending the court. For this reason he retired to his own house as often as he could ; but he received so many visits there that his expenses were hardly diminished. Wherever he was, his wife always found means to divert herself, whether with play, or dancing, or other amusements, to which young ladies may decorously addict themselves. When her husband sometimes told her that they spent too much, she would reply that he might be assured she would never make him a cuckold, but only a rogue. In fact, she was so fond of magnificence in attire, that she insisted on having dresses as rich and fine as any seen at the court, to which her husband took her as seldom as possible, notwithstanding her eager desire to be always there. For this reason she made herself so so complaisant to her husband that it was with difficulty he refused her most extravagant requests.

One day, when she had failed in all her devices to induce him to take her to court, she perceived that he looked very wistfully at a chambermaid of hers, and thought she might turn this circumstance in some way to her own advantage. She questioned the girl in private, and managed so cleverly, by dint of promises and threats, that she made her confess that since she had been in her service not a day had passed in which her master had not made love to her ; but that she would rather die than do anything contrary to God and her honor, the more so as the lady had done her the honor to receive her into her service, which would make the crime double.

The lady, on learning her husband's infidelity, was at once vexed and rejoiced. She was vexed that at the very time when he testified so much regard for her, he was furtively seeking means to put an affront upon her under her very eyes, and to quit her for a girl she regarded as greatly inferior to herself in beauty and attractions. She was rejoiced, because she hoped to surprise her husband in the fact, and to work him in such a way that he would never again reproach her with her lovers or her fondness for residing at court. To this end she begged the girl to yield gradually to her husband's

solicitations upon certain prescribed conditions. The girl made some objections ; but her mistress having made herself warrant for her life and honor, she promised to do whatever she pleased.

The next time the husband accosted the girl he found her quite changed, and pressed her to comply with more than his usual vivacity ; but knowing her part by rote, she represented to him that she was a poor girl, and would become poorer than ever if she yielded to him, because she would be dismissed by her mistress, in whose service she hoped to save enough to get her a good husband. The gentleman replied, that she had no need to be uneasy on that score, for he would settle her better in marriage than her mistress could do ; and, moreover, he would manage the intrigue with such secrecy that no one should ever be able to say a word against her. Thereupon the bargain was concluded. When the parties came to deliberate on the place where it was to be sealed, the girl said she knew no better place, or less likely to be suspected, than a little house in the park, in which it happened, fortunately, that there was a chamber and a bed. The gentleman, who would never have made objections to any place proposed, was quite satisfied with this, and awaited with great impatience the day and hour agreed on.

The girl kept her word with her mistress, told her all that had passed between her master and herself and said that the rendezvous was for the next day after dinner. She would not fail, she said, to give her mistress a signal when it was time for her to keep the appointment, and begged she would not fail to notice it, and be upon the spot in time to deliver her from the peril to which she exposed herself for her sake. The lady vowed she might depend upon her, begged her to have no fear, and assured her she would never forsake her, and would perfectly secure her from her master's resentment.

Next day after dinner the gentleman showed a fairer face to his wife than he had ever done ; this was by no means agreeable to her : but she dissembled so well that he never suspected what was passing in her mind. When dinner was over, she asked him how he would while away the time. He said he knew nothing better for the purpose than to play at cent.* The company then sat down to play, but she would

* *To play at cent.* This probably means the game now called piquet ;

not be of the party, saying she would be as much amused looking on. Before he sat down to play he did not forget to tell the girl to remember her promise. The game had no sooner begun than she went out of the room, making a sign to her mistress that she was setting out on the pilgrimage she had to make. The signal was not lost upon the wife, but the husband saw nothing. An hour afterwards, however, one of his valets having made him a sign from a distance, he told his wife he had a headache, and must go into the open air and rest a little. She knew what ailed him quite as well as he did himself, and asked him, should she hold his cards. He begged her to do so, and said he would soon be back. There was no need to hurry himself, she said, for she could play for two hours without being tired. The husband then retired to his chamber, and thence to the park. His wife, who knew a short way, waited a little, and then suddenly pretending to have the colic, she gave up her hand to another.

The moment she left the room she threw off her high pattens, and ran as fast to the place where she did not choose the bargain to be concluded without her, and arrived in good time, almost as soon as her husband. She remained behind the door to hear the fine things he said to her servant, and when she saw that he was approaching the criminal point, she caught hold of him behind, and said, "I am too near for you to take another." It is needless to ask if he was then in a towering passion, both at being frustrated of his expected pleasure, and at seeing that his wife, whose good-will he was afraid of losing for ever, knew more than he would have had her know. Believing, however, that it was a trick played upon him by the girl, he ran at her with such fury, without speaking to his wife, that if the latter had not held his hands he would have killed her. He said, in a transport of rage, that she was the worst baggage he had ever known, and that if his wife had waited, she would have seen that he only came there to try her and make a fool of her; and that instead of what she expected he would have given her a flogging. But the wife knew better than to accept such flimsy excuses, and rated him so roundly that he

it is an old game, and is among those enumerated by Rabelais in book i. ch. xxii. of *Gargantua*.

was greatly afraid she would leave him. He made her all the promises she desired, and touched by her sage remonstrances, he confessed that he was wrong to take it amiss that she had lovers. He agreed with her that a handsome and respectable woman is not the less virtuous for being loved, provided she say and do nothing contrary to her honor; but that a man is unpardonable who takes pains to pursue a girl who does not love him, and to wrong his wife and his own conscience. He ended by promising that he would no longer prevent her from going to court, nor ever take it amiss that she had lovers, convinced, as he was, that she retained them only for her diversion, not for any regard she had for them.

This language was not displeasing to the lady, who thought she had gained a great point; however, she pretended quite the reverse, saying she did not care to go to court, and that there was nothing dearer to her than his affection, without which all companies were odious to her. A woman, she said, who was loved by her husband, and who loved him as she did hers, carried with her a safe-conduct, warranting her to speak with all the world and be blamed by no one. The poor gentleman took such pains to assure her of the love he cherished for her, that at last they went back good friends. To avoid a recurrence of the mischief, he begged her to dismiss the servant who had caused all this hubbub. She did so; but it was by marrying her well and respectably at the expense of her husband, who, to make his wife forget the prank he had played took her soon to court with such pomp and magnificence that she had full reason to be satisfied.

This, ladies, was what made me say I was not surprised at the trick she had played on one of her lovers after the one I knew she had played on her husband.

"You have depicted to us a very sly wife, and a very stupid husband," said Hircan. "Since he had gone so far, he ought not to have stopped on so fair a road."

"And what should he have done?" inquired Longarine.

"What he wanted to do," replied Hircan, "for his wife was not less angry at knowing what he had intended to do than if he had actually done it. Perhaps she would have liked

him better if he had shown himself bolder and a better fellow."

"That's all very well," said Ennasuite; "but where do you find men who can force two women at once? The wife would have defended her rights, and the girl her maiden-head."

"That is true," said Hircan; "but a strong and bold man will fearlessly attack two weak persons, and be sure to get the better of them."

"I admit that if he had drawn his sword he might have killed them both," returned Ennasuite; "but I don't see how he could have escaped from them otherwise. Tell us, pray, what would you have done, had you been in his place?"

"I would have thrown my arms round my wife and carried her out of doors, and then I would have done what I pleased to the servant by fair means or by force."

"It is enough, Hircan," said Parlamente, "that you know how to do wrong."

"I am sure, Parlamente," he replied, "that I do not scandalize the innocent before whom I speak, or wish to maintain a bad cause. I neither praise the enterprise which was bad in itself, nor the enterpriser who stopped short half-way for fear rather than for love. I applaud a man who loves his wife as God ordains; but when he does not love her, I do not think the better of him for fearing her."

"Truly," returned Parlamente, "if love did not make you a good husband, what you would do for fear would be no great thing, and so I should esteem it."

"The love I have for you, Parlamente," said Hircan, "subjects me as much to your wishes as the fear of death and hell could do."

"You may say what you will," his wife replied, "but I have reason to be content with what I have seen and known of you. As for what I have not known, I have no wish to doubt, and still less to inquire about it."

"It is in my opinion," said Nomerfide, "a great folly in women to pry so curiously into what their husbands do; but it is no less a one in husbands to want to know every step taken by their wives. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, without taking so much thought for the morrow."

"Nevertheless it is sometimes necessary," said Oisille, "to

inquire into matters in which the honor of a house is concerned ; that is to say, for the purpose of setting things right, and not from a wish to judge ill of persons, for every one is liable to error."

"Many have come to mischief for want of inquiring into their wives' freaks," said Geburon.

"If you know any instance of the kind, pray tell it us," said Longarine.

"I will do so with pleasure," he replied, "since you desire it."

NOVEL LX.

A woman of Paris quits her husband for one of the king's chanters, counterfeits death, and is buried, but secretly disinterred alive and well—her husband marries another wife, and fifteen years afterwards is obliged to repudiate her, and take back his first wife.

THERE was in Paris a man so good-natured that he would have scrupled to believe that a man had lain with his wife though he had seen it with his own eyes. This poor man married the most profligate woman in the world, but never noticed her licentiousness, and treated her as though she were the best of wives. But one day, when King Louis XII. was in Paris, this woman went and gave herself up to one of that prince's chanters ; and when she found that the king was quitting Paris, and that she was about to lose her lover, she resolved to go with him and quit her husband. The chanter had no objection to this, and took her to a house he had near Blois, where they lived long together. The poor husband, not finding his wife, searched for her in all directions, and learned at last that she had gone off with the chanter. Wishing to recover his lost sheep, which he had badly guarded, he wrote her several letters, begging her to return, and promising to receive her, provided she would lead a good life for the future ; but she took such pleasure in the chanter's singing that she had forgotten her husband's voice, made no account of his fair words, and snapped her fingers at him. The incensed hus-

band then gave her notice that he would claim her legally through the Church, since she would not return to him of her own accord; whereupon, fearing that if justice meddled with the matter she and her chanter would come badly off, she devised a scheme worthy of such a woman.

She pretended to be sick, sent for some worthy women of the city to visit her, and they came the more willingly as they hoped to make her illness instrumental towards bringing her back from her vicious ways. To this end each of them addressed the best remonstrances she could to her, and the seemingly dying woman listened to them with tears, confessed her sin, and played the part so well, that the whole company had pity on her, believing her tears and her repentance to be sincere. They tried to console the poor penitent, told her that God was not so terrible by a great deal as some indiscreet preachers represented him to be, and assured her He would never withhold his mercy from her; and then they sent for a good man to hear her confession. Next day the priest of the parish came and administered to her the holy sacrament, which she received with so much devotion that all the good women of the town who were present were moved with tears, and praised the divine goodness for having had pity on the poor creature. Afterwards, upon her feigning that she could no longer swallow food, the priest brought her extreme unction, which she received with many fine signs of devotion; for she could hardly speak, at least so it was believed. She lay a long while in the same state; but at last the spectators imagined that she gradually lost her sight, her hearing, and her other senses, whereupon everybody began to cry, "Jesus! Lord! have mercy!" Night being now at hand, and the ladies having some way to go, they all retired. As they were leaving the house, word was brought them that she had just expired. They said a *De profundis* for her, and went away.

The priest asked the chanter where he would have her buried. He replied that she had expressed a wish to be buried in the cemetery, and that it would be advisable under the circumstances that the interment should take place by night. The unfortunate woman was laid out for burial by a servant, who took good care not to hurt her; and then she was carried by

torchlight to the grave which the chanter had caused to be dug. When the body was carried past the houses of those who had seen the deceased receive extreme unction, they all came out and accompanied her to the grave, where the priests and the women left her, but the chanter remained after them. The moment he saw that the company were far enough off, he and his servant woman lifted the pretended dead woman out of the grave more alive than ever, and took her back to his house, in which he kept her long concealed.

The husband, who was bent on recovering his wife, went to Blois to demand justice, and found that she was dead and buried. The fact was certified to him by all the ladies of Blois, who related to him what a fine end she had made ; and greatly did the good man rejoice, believing that the soul of his wife was in Paradise, and himself disencumbered of her wicked body. He returned to Paris with a glad heart, and entered into a second marriage with a respectable young woman, a good housewife, by whom he had several children, and with whom he lived fourteen or fifteen years. But at last rumor, which keeps no secrets, informed him that his first wife was not dead, and that she was still with her chanter. The poor man dissembled as much as he could, affecting to know nothing, and heartily wishing that the rumor might be false ; but his virtuous wife heard of it, and was so distressed that she almost died of grief. Could she have concealed her misfortune without wounding her conscience, she would gladly have done it ; but that was impossible, for the Church took up the matter at once, and began by separating them until the truth should have been ascertained. The fact having been verified, the poor man was constrained to quit his good wife and go after his bad one. He came to Blois shortly after Francis I. became king. He found there Queen Claude and the regent-mother, laid his complaint before them, and demanded of them her whom he would fain not have found ; but he was forced to seek her, to the great pity of all beholders.

His wife, on being confronted with him, insisted for a long time that he was not her husband ; which he would gladly have believed if he could. Angry but unabashed, she then told him she would rather die than go back to him. The good man was very well satisfied with this declaration ; but the

ladies, before whom she spoke so impudently, condemned her to return to her husband, and so sharply admonished and threatened the chanter, that he was constrained to tell his ugly mistress he did not want to have anything more to do with her, and that she must go back to her husband. Thus repulsed on all sides, the wretched creature went away with her husband, and was better treated by him than she deserved.

I repeat, ladies, that if the poor husband had taken heed to his wife, he would not thus have lost her; for a thing well watched is not easily lost, and doubtless the proverb is true, which says that negligence makes the thief.

"It is strange," remarked Hircan, "strong love is where it seems least reasonable."

"I have heard," said Simontault, "that one might sooner break two marriages than the love of a priest and his servant."

"I believe it," said Ennasuite, "for those who bind others in marriage know how to fasten the knot so tightly that it is only to be undone by death; the doctors, too, maintain that spiritual language is more persuasive than other, and consequently spiritual love surpasses every other kind."

"I cannot pardon ladies," said Dagoucin, "who forsake a well-bred husband or lover for a priest, however good-looking."

"Leave our holy mother the Church alone, I pray you," said Hircan, "and be assured that it is a great pleasure for poor timid women to sin in secret with those who can absolve them; for some there are who are much more ashamed of confessing a sin than of committing it."

"You speak of such as know not God," said Oisille, "and imagine that secret things will not be revealed before the whole host of Heaven. But I do not believe that it is for sake of confession that such women seek confessors. The enemy has so blinded them that they think much more of settling down upon a place that seems to them the most secret and secure, than of having absolution for the guilt of which they do not repent."

"Repent, indeed!" exclaimed Saffredent. "They think themselves much more saintly than other women, and I am

SEVENTH DAY.

*On the Seventh Day relation is made of such as
have done quite contrary to their
duty or desire.*

sure that there are some who think it a great honor to them to persevere in intrigues of this sort."

"From the way in which you express yourself," said Oisille, "one would think you know some such person. That being the case, I beg you will begin the day to-morrow by telling us what you know. There goes the last bell for vespers; for the monks went away after our tenth novel, and left us to decide our dispute between ourselves."

So saying she rose, and the company following her example, they went to church, where they found they were waited for. After vespers they supped, and not without talking over several fine tales. After supper they all went, according to custom, to divert themselves in the meadow, and then to bed, to have their memories clearer next day.

SEVENTH DAY.

MADAME OISILLE failed not to administer to them in the morning the wholesome pasture she drew from the reading of the acts and virtuous deeds of the glorious knights and apostles of Jesus Christ, and told them that those narratives were enough to fill one with the wish to have lived in such times, and make one deplore the deformity of this age compared with that. After reading and explaining to them the beginning of that excellent book, she begged them to go to church in the union with which the apostles addressed their prayers to Heaven, and solicit the grace of God, who never refuses it to those who ask for it with faith. Every one thought the advice very good, and they arrived in church just as the mass of the Holy Ghost was beginning. This was so *à propos*, that they listened to the service with great devotion. Again at dinner the conversation turned on the lives of the blessed apostles, and the subject was so pleasing that the company had nearly forgotten to return to the rendezvous for the novels. Nomerfide, who was the youngest of them, observed this, and said: "Madame Oisille has put us so much upon devotion, that the

time for relating novels is passing away without our thinking of retiring to prepare our novels." Thereupon the company rose, went for a short while to their respective chambers, and then repaired to the meadow as they had done the day before.

When all were comfortably seated, Madame Oisille said to Saffredent, "Though I am quite sure you will say nothing to the advantage of women, yet I must remind you that you promised us a novel yesterday evening."

"I stipulate, madam," replied Saffredent, "that I shall not pass for an evil speaker in speaking the truth, nor lose the good-will of virtuous ladies by relating what wantons do. Experience has taught me what it is to be deprived of their presence, and if I were likewise deprived of their good graces, I should not be alive at this moment."

So saying, he cast his eyes on the opposite side to that where sat she who was the cause of his weal and woe; but at the same time he looked at Ennasuite, and made her blush as if what he had said was meant for her. However, he was not the less understood by the right person. Madame Oisille having then assured him he might fairly speak the truth at the cost of whom it concerned, he began as follows.

NOVEL LXI.

A husband became Reconciled to his wife after she had lived fourteen or fifteen years with a canon.

THERE lived near the town of Autun a very handsome woman, fair complexioned, very tall, and of as goodly a presence as any woman I ever saw. She had married a respectable man, who seemed younger than herself, and with whom she had reason to be satisfied. Shortly after their marriage he took her to Autun, where he had business. Whilst the husband was engaged as a suitor in the courts of justice, the wife went to church and prayed for him. She continued her visits to that holy place so long, that a very rich canon fell in love

with her, and took his measures so well that the poor wretch gave herself up to him ; but the husband had no suspicion of this, and was more intent to taking care of his property than of his wife.

When the time came for the husband and wife to return to their home, which was distant seven good leagues from the town, great was the regret on her part. The canon promised to go see her often, which he did under pretence of journeys, in which he always called at their house. The husband was not such a fool as not to understand the canon's purpose, and accordingly, when he next came there he did not see the wife, for her husband had taken good care to prevent it. The wife pretended not to notice this jealousy, of which she was well aware, but she was bent on counteracting the precautions it led to, deeming it a hell to be deprived of the sight of her idol. One day, when her husband was abroad, she gave her men and women servants so much to do, that she remained alone and unobserved in the house. Immediately, taking what was necessary for her, and without any other company than her extravagant love, she started off on foot for Autun, where she arrived not so late but that she was recognized by her canon, who kept her close and concealed for more than a year, in spite of all the monitions and excommunications launched at him at the husband's suit.

Finding all other expedients fail, the husband laid his plaint before the bishop, whose archdeacon, as good a man as any in France, personally visited all the houses of the canons, until he found the woman who was supposed to be lost, committed her to prison, and condemned the canon to a heavy penance. The husband, hearing that his wife had been recovered by the exertions of the good archdeacon, and of several other worthy people, was willing to take her back upon her oath that, for the future, she would behave like an honest woman ; an oath which the simple man, who loved her much, readily believed that she would keep. He took her back into his house, and treated her in all respects as before, except that he gave her two old servant women, one of whom was always with her when the other was elsewhere. But for all her husband's good treatment, her extravagant love for the canon made her regard all her repose as a torment. Though she was a very fine woman,

and he a man of strong and vigorous temperament, yet she had no children by him, for her heart was always seven leagues away from her body. Nevertheless, such was her dissimulation, that her husband believed she had forgotten the past as he had done on his part; but her heart was too wicked to be capable of so happy and laudable a change.

At the very time when she saw that her husband loved her most and distrusted her least, she feigned illness, and carried on the deception so well that the poor husband was in great distress on her account, and spared nothing for her cure. At last he and all his household believed that she really was sinking to the grave. Seeing that her husband was as much afflicted at this as he had reason to be rejoiced, she begged he would authorize her to make her will; which he freely did with tears in his eyes. Having the power to make a will, because she had no children, she bequeathed to her husband all she had in her gift, beseeching his pardon for the affront she had put upon him. Then she sent for the parish priest, confessed, and received the holy sacrament of the altar with such devotion, that every one wept at witnessing so fine and so glorious an end. In the evening she begged her husband to have extreme unction brought her, and told him she was sinking so fast she was afraid she should not live to receive it. Her husband had it brought with the utmost speed, and she received it with a devotion that excited every one's admiration. After partaking of these fine mysteries she said to her husband, that since by God's grace she had received all that the Church had ordained, she felt her conscience so calm that she wished to repose a little, and begged that he would do the same, seeing what great need he had of it, after having wept and watched so long beside her bed. The husband and the men-servants having gone to sleep, the two old women who had kept guard over her so long while she was in health, having now no fear of losing her but by death, went to sleep likewise. As soon as she heard them snoring soundly, she got up in her shift, and stole out of the room, listening to hear if there was anybody stirring in the house. Finding all quiet, she passed out through a little garden door which was not locked, and walked all night, in her shift and barefooted, in the direction of Autun, to repair to the saint who had hindered her from dying.

The road, however, was so long, that daylight overtook her before she reached her journey's end. Looking round then on all sides, she saw two men on horseback coming towards her at full gallop, and making no doubt that one of them was her husband who was in pursuit of her, she hid her whole body in the mud of a marsh and her head between the rushes, and heard her husband say to his servant as he rode by like a man in despair, "O the wicked wretch! Who would ever have imagined that she would have thought of cloaking such an infamous and abominable act under the holy sacraments of the Church?"

"Since Judas did not scruple to betray his master when partaking of the like food," replied the servant, "can you wonder at a woman's betraying her husband in that manner?"

The husband rode on, and the wife remained among the rushes, more joyous at having duped and baffled him than ever she had been at home in a good bed, where she thought she was held in slavery. The husband searched for her all over Autun, but having clearly ascertained that she had not entered the town, he retraced his steps, and on his way did nothing but inveigh against her and his great loss, threatening her with nothing less than death if he caught her; but she was as inaccessible to fear as to the sense of cold, although the weather and the place might well have made her repent of her horrible journey. Any one who knew not how the fire of hell heats those who are full of it, would have wondered how this woman, coming out of a warm bed, could have endured such severe cold for a whole day. She did so, however, without losing courage, and resumed her journey to Autun as soon as night came. Just as they were about to close the town gates this pilgrim arrived, and went straightway to her saint, who was so astonished to see her in such a trim that he could hardly believe it was she. After turning her about and examining her well on all sides, he found that she had flesh and bones, which a spirit has not; he was satisfied she was not a phantom, and they agreed so well together that she remained with him for fourteen or fifteen years.

For a while she lived secluded, but at last she lost all fear; and what was worse, she prided herself so much on the honor of having such a lover, that she took precedence at church of

most of the respectable women of the town, the wives of officers as well as others. She had children by the canon, and, among others, a daughter, who was married to a rich merchant, with so much magnificence that all the ladies of the town were indignant, but had not influence enough to correct such an abuse.

It happened at this time that Queen Claude, consort of King Francis, passed through Autun, accompanied by the regent-mother and her daughter, the Duchess of Alençon. Then came a *femme de chambre* of the queen, named Perrette, to the duchess, and said to her, "Hearken to me, madam, I beseech you, and you will do as good an act as if you went to hear the service of the day, or even better." The duchess willingly listened, knowing that from her lips would come nothing but what was meet to be heard. Perrette told her how she had engaged a little girl to help her to soap the queen's linen, and that on asking her news of the town, the girl had told her of the vexation felt by the honorable ladies thereof at being obliged to yield precedence to this canon's wife, part of whose history she related to her. The duchess immediately went to the queen and the regent-mother, and repeated to them what she had heard; and without other form of process they immediately sent for that wretch, who did not conceal herself; far, indeed, of being ashamed, she was proud of the honor of being the mistress of the house of so rich a man. Accordingly, she presented herself with effrontery before the princesses, who were so astounded at her impudence, that at first they knew not what to say to her; but afterwards the regent-mother spoke to her in terms that would have drawn tears from any woman of good understanding. Instead, however, of weeping, the wretched woman said to them with great assurance:

"I beseech you, mesdames, not to let my honor be touched; for, thank God, I have lived with the canon so well and so virtuously, that no one can say a word against me on that score. Let it not be supposed that I offend God; for it is three years since the good canon has touched me, and we live as chastely and with as much love as if we were two dear little angels, without there ever having been between us a word or a wish to the contrary. Whoever, then, shall disunite us will commit a

great sin ; for the good man, who is nearly eighty years old, will not live long without me, who am forty-five."

You may imagine what these ladies said to her, and how they reproved her for her obduracy : but say what they would to her, old as she was, and illustrious and worshipful as were the persons who addressed her, there was no shaking her obstinacy. To humble her the princesses sent for the good archdeacon of Autun, who sentenced her to a year's imprisonment on bread and water. They also sent for her husband, who, in consideration of their good exhortations, promised to take her back after her penance. But finding herself a prisoner, and knowing that the canon was resolved never to take her back, she thanked the ladies for having taken a devil off her shoulders ; and her repentance was so great and so perfect that her husband, instead of waiting the year's end to take her back, did not wait a fortnight before he claimed her of the archdeacon, and they have since that lived together in peace and harmony.

You see, ladies, how wicked ministers convert St. Peter's chains into chains of Satan, so strong and hard to break, that the sacraments, which cast out devils, are means of retaining them longer in the consciences of such people ; for the best things become the most pernicious when they are abused.

"Truly she was a great wretch," said Oisille, "but no less true is it that she was severely punished in appearing before such judges. In fact, the regent-mother's mere look had such a virtue, that there was no good woman who did not fear to stand before her, thinking herself unworthy of her sight ; or who, if regarded by her with gentleness, did not think herself deserving of great honor, knowing that the regent-mother was one who could not look with a favorable eye upon any but virtuous women."

"It would be a fine thing," said Hircan, "that one should stand more in awe of the eyes of a woman than of the holy sacrament, which if not received in faith and charity is received to eternal damnation."

"I promise you," said Parlamente, "that those who are not inspired of God are more afraid of temporal than of spiritual powers. I believe, too, that this wretched woman was much

more mortified by her imprisonment and by the loss of her canon, than by all the remonstrances and rebukes that could be addressed to her."

"But you forget the principal thing that determined her to return to her husband," said Simontault, "and that was that the canon was eighty years old, and her husband was younger than herself; so the good lady was a gainer on both hands. But had the canon been young, she would never have quitted him; the remonstrances of the ladies would have availed no more than the sacraments."

"I think she did right," said Nomerfide, "not to confess her sin too easily; for one should only tell that sort of offence humbly to God, and deny it stoutly before men, since, though the thing be true, by dint of lying and swearing one throws doubt on its truth."

"It is difficult, however, for a sin to be so secret as never to come to light," said Longarine, "unless God himself conceals it for sake of those who repent of it truly for love of Him."

"What would you say of women," said Hircan, "who have no sooner committed a folly than they go and tell it?"

"The thing seems so surprising," said Longarine, "that it seems to me a token that they do not dislike the sin. I have already said that the sin which is not covered by the grace of God can hardly be denied before men. There are many who take pleasure in talking of such things, and glory in publishing their vices, and others who accuse themselves by self-contradiction."

"That is a very clumsy kind of self-contradiction," said Saffredent, "but if you know any example of it, I beg you will relate it."

"Hearken, then," said Longarine.

NOVEL LXII.

A lady recounting an adventure of gallantry that had occurred to herself, and speaking in the third person, inadvertently betrayed her own secret.

IN the time of King Francis I. there was a lady of the blood royal who had honor, virtue, and beauty, and who knew how to tell a story with grace, and also to laugh at a good one when she heard it.* This lady being at one of her houses, was visited by all her dependants and neighbors, by whom she was greatly beloved. Among other visits she received one from a certain lady, who, seeing that every one told the princess tales to divert her, wished to do like the rest, and said, "I have a good story to tell you, madam ; but you must promise not to speak of it. It is quite true, and I can conscientiously give it you as such.

"There was a married lady who lived on very creditable terms with her husband, though he was old and she young. A gentleman in her neighborhood, seeing she had married this old man, fell in love with her, and solicited her for several years, but she only replied to him as became a virtuous woman. One day it occurred to the gentleman that if he could come upon her at a moment advantageous to himself, she would perhaps not be so cruel. After he had long weighed the danger to which he exposed himself, love smoothed over all difficulties, dissipated his fear, and determined him to seek time and opportunity. Keeping good watch for intelligence, he learned that the lady's husband was going away to another of his houses, and intended to set out at daybreak to avoid the heat, whereupon he repaired to the lady and found her asleep in bed. Seeing that the maid-servants were not in the chamber, he got into the lady's bed, booted and spurred as he was, without having had the wit to lock the door. She awoke, and was very much vexed to see him there ; but in spite of all

* The lady of the blood royal whom Margaret eulogizes so highly was probably her mother, who was very fond of hearing all sorts of court gossip.

her remonstrances there was no stopping him—he violated her, and threatened, if she made a noise, to tell everybody she had sent for him; which frightened her so much that she durst not cry out. One of the servants came back some moments afterwards into the chamber. The gentleman jumped up with such celerity that she would have noticed nothing, if his spur had not stuck in the top sheet, and carried it clean off the bed, leaving the lady quite naked.”

So far the lady had told her story as if of another; but here she could not help saying:

“Never was woman more astonished than I when I found myself thus naked.”

The princess, who had listened to the whole tale without a smile, could not then restrain her laughter, and said, “I see you were quite right in saying you knew the story to be true.” The poor lady tried hard to mend the matter; but there was no possibility of finding a good plaister for it.

I assure you, ladies, if the act had given her real pain she would have been glad to have lost the recollection of it; but as I have already said, sin is sure to discover itself unless it be covered by the mantle which, as David says, makes man blessed.

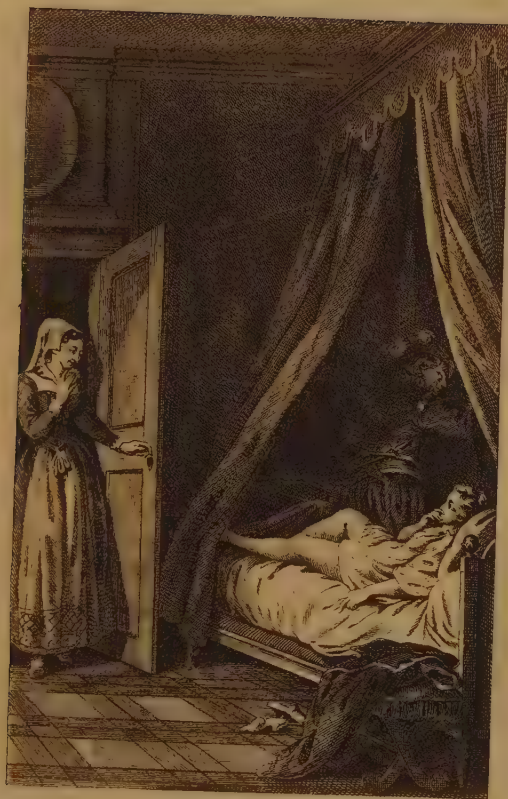
“Truly, of all the fools I ever heard of this was the greatest, to set others laughing at her own expense,” said Ennasuite.

“I am not surprised that speech follows action,” said Parlamente; “for it is easier to say than to do.”

“Why,” said Geburon, “what sin had she committed? She was asleep in her bed, and he threatened her with death and infamy. Lucretia, who has been so much lauded, did quite as much.”

“It is true,” said Parlamente, “there is no righteous person who may not fall; but when one has felt at the instant great disgust at one’s fall, one remembers it only with horror. To efface its memory Lucretia killed herself; but this wanton chose to make others laugh at it in her own case.”

“It seems to me, nevertheless,” said Nomerfide, “that she was a good woman, since she was urgently solicited several times, but would not consent. Accordingly, the gentleman was obliged to use fraud and violence in order to succeed.”



"What!" said Parlamente, "do you suppose that a woman's honor is spotless when she succumbs after two or three refusals? At that rate there would be many a woman of honor among those who are regarded as having none. Plenty of women have been known for a long time to repulse him to whom their hearts were already given. Some do it because they fear infamy; others to make themselves the more loved and esteemed by a feigned resistance. A woman, therefore, ought not to be held in any consideration unless she remains firm to the end."

"If a young man were to refuse a handsome girl," said Dagoucín, "would you not regard that as a great act of virtue?"

"Assuredly," said Oisille, "if a young man in good health made such a refusal, I should think the act very laudable, but not hard to believe."

"I know some," said Dagoucín, "who have refused adventures which all their comrades sought for with avidity."

"Pray take my place," said Longarine, "and tell us what you know in that way; but recollect that we are pledged to speak the truth."

"I promise to tell it you," said Dagoucín, "without cover or disguise."

NOVEL LXIII.

Notable chastity of a French lord.

THERE were in Paris four girls, two of whom were sisters, so handsome, so young, and so fresh, that they had the choice of all the gallants. The gentleman whom the king then reigning had made provost of Paris, seeing that his master was young, and of an age to desire such company, managed so dexterously with the four, making each of them believe that she was for the king, that they consented to what the provost desired. This was that they should all be present at a banquet to which he invited his master, communicating to him his design, which was approved by the king, and by two great

lords of the court, who were not sorry to have a finger in the pie. While they were at a loss for a fourth, in came a young lord, a handsome, well-bred man, and younger by ten years than the others. He was at once invited to the treat, and accepted the invitation with a good grace, though in reality he had no mind for it, for two reasons. He had a wife with whom he was very happy, who bore him fine children; and they lived so tranquilly together, that for no consideration would he have given her cause to suspect him. Besides, he loved one of the handsomest ladies then in France, and esteemed her so much that all others seemed ugly to him in comparison with her; so that in his early youth, and before he was married, there was no means of making him see and frequent other women, however fair, for he had more pleasure in seeing his mistress, and loving her perfectly, than he could have had from all he could have obtained of another.

This young lord went to his wife, told her what the king had in view, and said he would rather die than do what he had promised. "As there is no man," he said, "whom I would not dare to attack in anger, so I would rather die than commit a murder in cold blood, unless honor compelled to it. In like manner I would rather die than violate conjugal fidelity at another's caprice, unless extreme love, such as blinds the best, extorted such a violation from me."

His wife, seeing in him so much virtue with so much youth, loved him more than ever, and asked him how he could excuse himself, seeing that princes often take it amiss that others do not applaud what they like. "I have heard say," he replied, "that the wise man is always ready at a critical moment with an illness or a journey. So I intend to be sick four or five days beforehand; and, provided you play the sorrowing wife, I trust I shall get out of the scrape."

"This is what one may call a good and holy hypocrisy," said his wife. "I will not fail to wear as sad a face as possible; for one is very fortunate when one can avoid offending God and provoking the sovereign's resentment."

So said, so done; and the king was very sorry to hear through the wife of the husband's illness, which, however, was not of long duration. Certain affairs having then supervened to claim the king's attention, he forgot his pleasure to think

of his duty, and suddenly quitted Paris. One day, recollecting his unfulfilled project, he said to the young prince, "We were great fools to quit Paris with such haste as not to have seen the four girls who have been represented to us as the handsomest in my realm."

"I am very glad," replied the prince, "that you have not done so, for I was greatly afraid during my illness that I alone should lose such a good fortune."

The king never suspected the dissimulation of the young lord, who thenceforth was more beloved by his wife than ever."*

Parlamente burst out laughing, and said, "He would have shown his love for his wife much more if he had done it for her sake only; but, in any point of view, such conduct was certainly most commendable."

"It seems to me no such great merit in a man to be chaste for his wife's sake," said Hircan. "He is bound to it by so many reasons that he can hardly do otherwise. In the first place, God commands it; he is pledged to it by his marriage vow; and besides, the satiated appetite is not subjected to temptation like the craving one. But for the free love one cherishes for a mistress whom one does not enjoy, obtaining from her no other pleasure than that of seeing and speaking to her, and often nothing but mortifying replies, when this love is so faithful and so constant that it will not change, happen what may, then I maintain that chastity displayed on occasions of this sort is not only laudable but miraculous."

"It is no miracle," said Oisille, "for when the heart is devoted, nothing is impossible for the body."

"Yes, for angelic bodies," observed Hircan.

"I do not mean to speak only of those who by God's grace are all transmuted into Him," said Oisille, "but also of the most carnal among men; and if you examine, you will find that those who have set their hearts and affections on seeking perfection in the sciences, have not only forgotten the delights

* This novel is wanting in the edition of 1558, published by Boais-tuau; it appeared for the first time in that of Gruget in 1559. The king who figures in it is Francis I.; and the gentleman whom the king had made provost of Paris is Jean de la Barre, who is mentioned in Novel I.

of the flesh, but even things which are most necessary to nature, such as food and drink. In fact, as long as the soul is in the body by affection, the flesh remains, as it were, insensible. Thence it comes that those who love handsome and virtuous women take such delight in seeing and hearing them speak, that the flesh then suspends all its desires. Those who cannot experience this contentment are carnal persons, who, enveloped in too much fat, know not whether they have a soul or not; but when the body is subjected to the spirit, it is almost insensible to the imperfections of the flesh, so that the strong persuasions of persons of this character may render them insensible. I knew a gentleman who, to show that his love for his mistress surpassed any other man's, was willing to give proof of this by holding his bare fingers over the flame of a candle. He had his eyes bent on his mistress at the same moment, and he bore the fire with such fortitude that he burned himself to the bone; and yet he said that he felt no pain."

"Methinks," said Geburon, "that the devil to whom he was a martyr ought to make a St. Lawrence of him, for there are few who endure such a great fire of love as not to fear that of the smallest taper. If a lady had put me to so severe a trial, I should demand a great recompense of her; or, failing it, should cease to love her."

"You would then insist on having your hour after your mistress has had hers," said Parlamente. "So did a Spanish gentleman of Valencia, whose story was related to me by a very worthy commander."

"Pray take my place, madam, and tell it us," said Dagoucin, "for I suspect it is a good one."

"The story I am going to relate, ladies," said Parlamente, "will make you think twice before you refuse a good offer, and not trust that the present state of things will last for ever. You shall see that it is subject to change, and that will oblige you to have a care for the future."

NOVEL LXIV.

A gentleman having been unable to marry a person he loves, becomes a Cordelier in despite—Sore distress of his mistress thereat.

THERE was in Valencia a gentleman who for five or six years had loved a lady with so much propriety, that the honor and conscience of neither had suffered any blemish. The gentleman's intention was to marry her—an intention the more reasonable as he was handsome, rich, and of good family. Before engaging in the lady's service, he had an explanation with her on the subject of marriage, respecting which she referred him to her relations. They assembled to consider the question, and resolved that the match was a very suitable one, provided the young lady was willing. But she, whether thinking to do better, or willing to dissemble her love for the gentleman, started so many objections, that the assembly broke up, regretting that they had not been able to bring the affair to a conclusion, advantageous as it would have been on both sides. The most sorely disappointed of all was the poor lover, who could have borne his rejection with patience if he could have persuaded himself that it was not the maiden's fault, but her relations'. But as the truth was well known to him, his affliction was so extreme that, without speaking to his mistress or any one, he went home, and, after setting his affairs in order, retired to a deserted spot to try to forget his love, and turn it wholly towards Our Lord, to whom he was more bound in gratitude than to his mistress.

During his abode there he heard nothing from the lady or her relations, and resolved, after having missed the happiest life he could have hoped for, to choose the most austere and disagreeable he could imagine. In this dismal state of mind, which might well be called despair, he betook himself, with a view to becoming a monk, to a Franciscan monastery, which was not far from the residences of several of his relations. As soon as they were aware of his purpose, they did all they could to dissuade him from it, but his resolution was so fixed that nothing could shake it. As the cause of the mischief was

known to them, they sought a remedy at the hands of her who had given occasion to such a precipitate fit of devotion. She was greatly surprised and distressed at this news; and as her intention had only been to try her lover's fervor by refusing him for a while, and not to lose him for ever, as she saw she was about to do, she wrote him a letter, earnestly beseeching him to forego his dismal resolution, and return to her who loved him, and was ready to be wholly his own, as she had always desired to be, even when she affected coyness for the purpose of proving the sincerity of his love, whereof she was now fully convinced.

This letter, conveyed by one of her friends, who was charged to accompany it with all possible remonstrances, was received by the gentleman Cordelier with so sad a countenance, and with so many tears and sighs, that it seemed as though he would fain have drowned and burned the poor paper. His only reply was to tell the bearer that the mortification of his excessive passion had cost him so dear, that it had taken from him the wish to love and the fear to die. That being the case, he begged her who was the occasion of it, and who had not chosen to respond to his passion, to torment him no more now that he had overcome it, and to content herself with the harm she had already done him. "I could find no other remedy," he said, "than the austere life I have chosen. Continual penance makes me forget my grief. I so weaken my body by fastings and castigations, that the thought of death is for me a sovereign consolation. Let her, then, who sends you to me, spare me, I entreat, the misery of hearing her mentioned, for the mere recollection of her name is to me an intolerable purgatory."

The bearer returned with this unwelcome reply, and reported it to her who had sent him. It was with inconceivable regret she heard it; but love, which will not suffer the spirit to be utterly cast down, put it into her head that if she could see him she would effect more by her eyes and her tongue than she had by her pen. She went then to the monastery, accompanied by her father and her nearest relations. She had omitted nothing that she thought could set off her beauty, in the belief that if he once saw her and heard her, it was impossible but that a fire so long cherished should kindle up

more strongly than ever. She entered the monastery towards the end of vespers, and sent for him to meet her in a chapel of the cloisters. Not knowing who wanted him, he obeyed the summons, and went to encounter the rudest stock he had ever sustained. He was so pale and worn that she could hardly recognize him; nevertheless, as he seemed to her as comely and as lovable as ever, love constrained her to stretch out her arms, thinking to embrace him; but she was so touched by the sad state in which he appeared, and the idea of it caused such a sinking at the heart, that she fainted away. The good monk, who was not destitute of brotherly charity, raised her up, and seated her on a bench in the chapel. Though he had not less need of aid than she, he nevertheless affected to ignore her passion, fortifying his heart in the love of his God against the present opportunity, and he succeeded so well that he seemed to be unconscious of what was before his eyes.

Recovering from her weakness, and turning upon him eyes so lovely and so sad that they might have softened a rock, the maiden said everything she could think of as most likely to persuade him to quit that place. To all her arguments and entreaties he made the best replies he could; but at last, finding that his heart was beginning to yield to his mistress's tears, and seeing that Love, whose cruelty he had long experienced, had in its hand a gilded arrow ready to inflict on him a new and mortal wound, he fled from Love and from his mistress, as his only means of safety. Shut up, then, in his cell, and unable to let her depart in that uncertainty, he wrote her a few words in Spanish, which appear to me so expressive, that I will not translate them for fear of impairing their grace: *Volved donde veniste anima mi, que en las tristes vidas es la mia*.* The lady seeing from this that no hope remained, resolved to follow his advice and that of her friends, and returned home, to lead a life as melancholy as that of her lover in his monastery was austere.

You see, ladies, how the gentleman revenged himself on his rigorous mistress, who, intending only to try him, drove him

* "Return whence thou camest, my soul, for among the sad lives is mine."

to such despair, that, when she would have relented towards him, it was too late.

"I am sorry he did not throw off the gray gown and marry her," said Nomerfide. "Theirs, I think, would have been a perfectly happy marriage."

"In faith I think he did very wisely," said Simontault; "for all who have well considered the inconveniences of marriage are agreed that there are none greater in the austerities of the monastic life. As he was already weakened by fastings and abstinences, he was afraid to load himself with a burden he would have been obliged to bear all his life long."

"She did wrong, I think, by so weak a man," said Hircan, "to tempt him by a proposal of marriage, since that is a matter in which the most vigorous and robust find themselves hard bestead. But if she had talked to him of an intimacy free from all but voluntary obligation, there was no knot but would have been untied. But since, by way of drawing him out of purgatory, she offered him a hell, I maintain that he was right to refuse, and make her feel the pain which her refusal had caused him."

"Many there are," said Ennasuite, "who, thinking to do better than others, do either worse, or the reverse of what they had expected."

"Truly you put me in mind," said Geburon, "though the fact is not quite to the point, of a woman who did the contrary of what she intended, which was the cause of a great tumult in the church of Saint Jean de Lyon."

"Pray take my place," said Parlamente, "and tell us the story."

"Mine will be neither so long nor so sad as yours," he replied.

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NOVEL LXV.

Simplicity of an old woman who presented a lighted candle to Saint Jean de Lyon, and wanted to fasten it on the forehead of a soldier who was sleeping on a tomb—What happened in consequence.

THERE was a very dark chapel in the church of Saint Jean de Lyon, and in front of the chapel a stone tomb, with figures of great personages as large as life, and several men-at-arms represented in sleeping postures round them. A soldier walking one day about the church (it was in the heat of summer) felt inclined to sleep. He cast his eyes on this chapel, and seeing it was dark and cool, he went and lay down among the other recumbent figures on the tomb, and fell asleep. Presently up came a very pious old woman, who, after performing her devotions with a candle in her hand, wanted to fix it to the tomb, and the sleeping man being more within her reach than the other figures, she set about sticking the candle on his forehead, imagining that it was stone; but the wax would not stick. The good woman, supposing that this was in consequence of the coldness of the image, clapped the lighted end of the candle to its forehead, but the image, which was not insensible, began to roar. The good woman was frightened almost out of her wits, and shrieked out "Miracle, miracle!" so loudly, that all the people in church ran, some to the bells, others to the scene of the miracle. She took them to see the image which had stirred, which made many laugh; but certain priests, not contenting themselves with laughing, resolved to turn the tomb to account, and make as much money of it as of the crucifix on their pulpit, which is said to have spoken; but the display of an old woman's silliness put an end to the comedy."

If every one knew what are their follies they would not be deemed holy, nor their miracles true. I pray you then, ladies, take care, henceforth, to what saints you give your candles.

* The end of this novel, and the whole epilogue, were suppressed in the first edition. Gruget restored the epilogue in the second edition, but not the passage relating to the crucifix.

"How strange it is," said Hircan, "that be it in what manner it may, women must always do wrong!"

"Is it doing wrong to carry candles to the tomb?" said Nomerfide.

"Yes," replied Hircan, "when the lighted end is put to a man's forehead; for no good deed should be called a good deed when mischief comes of it. The poor woman thought of course she had made a grand present to God in giving Him a paltry candle."

"God does not look to the value of the present," said Oisille, "but to the heart that offers it. Perhaps this poor woman loved God more than those who gave great torches; for as the Gospel says, she gave out of her need."

"I do not believe, however," said Saffredent, "that God, who is supreme wisdom, can look with favor on women's folly. Simplicity is acceptable to Him, it is true; but the Scriptures inform me that He scorns the ignorant; and if we are there commanded to be simple as doves, we are also enjoined to be prudent as serpents."

"For my part," said Oisille, "I do not regard as ignorant her who carries before God her lighted candle, as making *amende honorable*, kneeling on the ground, and candle in hand, to her sovereign Lord, in order to confess her guilt, and pray with lively faith for His grace and salvation."

"Would to God that every one acquitted herself in this way as well as you," said Dagoucin; "but I do not believe that poor ignorant women do the thing with this intention."

"Those women who are least capable of expressing themselves well," rejoined Oisille, "are often those who have the most lively sense of the love and the will of God; consequently, it is prudent not to judge any but oneself."

"It is no wonderful thing to have frightened a sleeping groom," said Ennasuite, laughing, "since women of as mean condition have frightened great princes without setting fire to their foreheads."

"I am sure you know some story of the sort which you wish to tell us," said Dagoucin, "so take my place, if you please."

"The story will not be long," said Ennasuite; "but if I could recount it to you as it occurred, you would have no mind to cry."

NOVEL LXVI.

Amusing adventure of Monsieur de Vendôme and the Princess of Navarre.

THE year when Monsieur de Vendôme married the Princess of Navarre, the king and queen, their father and mother, after having been regaled at Vendôme, accompanied them into Guienne. They visited the house of a gentleman in which there were several ladies, young and fair, and where the company danced so long that the young married pair, being tired, retired to their chamber, where they threw themselves on the bed in their clothes, the doors and windows being closed, and no one remaining with them. They were wakened from their sleep by the sound of some one opening their door from without. Monsieur de Vendôme drew back the curtain, and looked out to see who it might be, supposing that it was one of his friends who wished to surprise him. But instead of that he saw a tall old chamber-woman, who walked straight up to their bed. It was too dark for her to distinguish their features but she could see that they were very close together, and cried out, "Ah, thou naughty, shameless wanton! 'tis long I have suspected thee for what thou art; but not having proofs to show, I durst not speak of it to my mistress, but now I have seen thy infamy I am resolved to conceal it no longer. And thou, villainous apostate, that hast done this house the scorn to beguile this poor wench, were it not for the fear of God I would beat the life out of thee on the spot. Get up, in the devil's name, get up! It seems thou art not even ashamed."

Monsieur de Vendôme and the princess, to prolong the scene, hid their faces against each other, and laughed so heartily that they could not speak. The chamber-woman, seeing then that they did not budge for her rebuke, or show any signs of rising, went to drag them out of bed by the legs and arms; but then she perceived by their dresses that they were not what she took them for. The moment she recognized their faces she fell on her knees and implored their pardon for the fault she had committed in disturbing them. Monsieur

de Vendôme, wishing to know more of the matter, got up at once and begged the good woman to tell him for whom she had taken them. At first she would not do so; but after making him promise on oath that he would never mention it, she told him that the cause of her mistake was a demoiselle belonging to the house, with whom a prothonotary* was in love; and she had long watched them, because she was vexed that her mistress put confidence in a man who offered her such an affront. She then retired, and left the prince and princess shut in as she had found them. They laughed long at the adventure; and though they often told the tale, nevertheless they would never name the persons for whom they had been mistaken.

You see, ladies, how the good woman, thinking to do a righteous act, informed these princely strangers of things whereof the domestics of the house had never heard a word.†

* The office of Apostolic Prothonotary was instituted in the early times of the Romish Church by Pope Clement I. There were originally twelve such officers, and their duty was to write the lives of the saints and the other apostolic records. Gradually their number increased, and their functions diminished in importance, so that in the fifteenth century the title of prothonotary was merely an honorary dignity conferred as a matter of course on doctors of theology of noble family, or otherwise of a certain importance. Brantôme says, in the beginning of his 28th Discours on the great captains and illustrious men of France: "Monsieur de l'Escun, brother of M. de Lautrec, was a good captain, but more intrepid and valiant than remarkable for the morality of his conduct. He had been destined for the long robe, and studied for a long time at Pavia in the time of the grand master Chaumont, when Milan was in our peaceable possession. He was called the Prothonotary of Foix, but I think he was what the Spaniard calls *un letrado que no tenia muchas letras*—that is to say, a *literatus* who had little acquaintance with letters; and indeed it was usual in those days with prothonotaries, and even with those of good family, not to have much learning, but to enjoy themselves, hunt, make love, and generally to cuckold the poor gentlemen who were gone to the wars. There was a song in those days in which a lady says:

' Passerey vous tousjours par cy (*dis*)
Prothenotaire sans soucy? "

† This novel was omitted in the first edition of the Heptameron. It was in 1548 that Antoine de Bourbon, Duke of Vendôme, married Jeanne de Navarre, only daughter of Margaret, and mother of Henri IV. King of France.

"I think," said Parlamente, "I know where the adventure happened, and the name of the prothonotary. He has already governed many ladies' houses, and when he cannot win the good graces of the mistress, he never misses one of the demoiselles; with that exception, he is a well-behaved and worthy man."

"Why do you say with that exception," said Hircan, "since it is for that very thing that I esteem him a worthy man?"

"I see," replied Parlamente, "that you know the malady and the patient, and that if he needed an apology you would not fail to be his advocate. However, I should not like to entrust an intrigue to a man who did not know how to conduct his own without letting it be known even to the chamberwomen."

"Do you suppose," said Nomerfide, "that men care whether such things are known or not? Provided they attain their end, that is enough for them. Be assured, that if nobody spoke of the matter they would publish it themselves."

"There is no need for men to say all they know," said Hircan, angrily.

"Perhaps," replied Nomerfide, blushing, "they would say nothing to their own advantage."

"To hear you talk," said Simontault, "it seems as though men took pleasure in hearing women spoken ill of, and I am sure you think me one of that sort. For that reason I have a great mind to say some good of them, that I may not be regarded as a slanderer."

"I give you my vote," said Ennasuite, "and pray you to constrain yourself a little in order to do your devoir to our honor."

"It is no new thing, ladies," said Simontault, "to hear of your virtues. In my opinion, when some one of your noble actions presents itself, far from being hidden it ought to be written in letters of gold, to serve as an example to women, and to give men cause for admiration, to see in the weaker sex what weakness recoils from. It is this that prompts me to relate what I heard from Captain Robertval and several of his company."

NOVEL LXVII.

Love and extreme hardships of a woman in a foreign land.

THE king having given the command of a small squadron to Robertval for an expedition he had resolved to make to the island of Canada, that captain intended to settle in the island, in case the air proved good, and to build towns and castles there. Every one knows what were the beginnings of this project. In order to people the country with Christians, he took with him all sorts of artisans, among whom there was one who was base enough to betray his master, so that he was near falling into the hands of the natives. But it was God's will that the conspiracy should be discovered; and so did no great harm to Captain Robertval, who had the traitor seized, intending to hang him as he deserved. He would have done so but for the wife of this wretch, who, after sharing the perils of the sea with her husband, was willing to follow his bad fortune to the end. She prevailed so far by her tears and supplications, that Robertval, both for the services she had rendered him, and from compassion for her, granted what she asked. This was, that her husband and herself should be left on a little island in the sea, inhabited only by wild beasts, with permission to take with them what was necessary for their subsistence.

The poor creatures, left alone with fierce beasts, had recourse only to God, who had always been the firm hope of the poor wife. As she had no consolation but in her God, she took with her for her preservation, her nurture, and her consolation, the New Testament, which she read incessantly. Moreover, she worked along with her husband at building a small dwelling. When the lions and other wild beasts approached to devour them, the husband with his arquebuse, and the wife with stones, defended themselves so well, that not only the beasts durst not approach them, but even they often killed some of them which were good to eat. They subsisted for a long time on such flesh and on herbs after their bread

was gone. However, in the long run, the husband could not resist the effects of such diet; besides, they drank such unwholesome water that he became greatly swollen, and died in a short while, having no other service or consolation than his wife's, who acted as his physician and his confessor; so that he passed with joy from his desert to the heavenly land. The poor woman buried him in a grave which she made as deep as she could; the beasts, however, immediately got scent of it, and came to devour the body, but the poor woman firing from her little dwelling with her arquebuse, hindered her husband's body from having such a burial. Thus living like the beasts as to her body, and like the angels as to her spirit, she passed the time in reading, contemplation, prayers, and orisons, having a cheerful and contented spirit in a body emaciated and half dead.

But He who never forsakes his own in their need, and who displays His powers when all seems hopeless, did not suffer that the virtue with which this woman was endowed should be unknown to the world, but that it should be known there for His glory. After some time one of the vessels of Robertval's fleet passing before the island, those on deck saw a woman, who reminded them of the persons they had put ashore there, and they resolved to go and see in what manner God had disposed of them. The poor woman, seeing the vessel approach went down to the sea-beach, where they found her on landing. After thanking God for their arrival, she took them to her poor little hut, and showed them on what she had subsisted during her melancholy abode there. They could never have believed it, had they not known that God can nourish his servants in a desert as at the finest banquets in the world. As she could not remain in such a place, they took her straightway with them to Rochelle; and there, when they had made known to the inhabitants the fidelity and perseverance of this woman, the ladies paid her great honor, and were glad to send their daughters to her to learn to read and write. She maintained herself for the rest of her days by that honorable profession, having no other desire than to exhort every one to love God and trust in Him, holding forth as an example the great mercy with which He had dealt towards her.

Now, ladies, you cannot say but that I laud the virtues

which God has implanted in you—virtues which appear the greater, the weaker the being that displays them.

“We are not sorry,” said Oisille, “that you praise in us the graces of our Lord, for in truth it is from Him that comes all virtue; but neither man nor woman contributes to the work of God. In vain both bestir themselves and strive to do well; they do but plant, and it is God that gives the increase.”

“If you have well read Scripture,” said Saffredent, “You know that St. Paul says that he has planted and Apollos has watered; but he does not speak of women having put their hands to the work of God.”

“You do like those bad men who take a passage of Scripture which makes for them, and pass over that which is contrary to them,” said Parlamente. “If you have read St. Paul from one end to the other, you will find that he commends himself to the ladies who have toiled much with him in the propagation of the Gospel.”

“Be that as it may,” said Longarine, “this woman is worthy of great praise, both for her love for her husband, for whom she risked her life, and her confidence in God, who, as you see, did not abandon her.”

“As for the first point,” said Ennasuite, “I believe there is no wife present who would not do as much to save her husband’s life.”

“And I believe,” said Parlamente, “that there are husbands such mere beasts that it could be no surprise to their wives to find themselves reduced to live among their fellows.”

Ennasuite could not help replying, as taking this to have been said on her account, “If beasts did not bite me, their company would be more agreeable to me than that of men, who are irascible and unbearable. But I do not retract my assertion, and I say again, that if my husband was in the like danger, I would not forsake him though it were to cost me my life.”

“Beware,” said Nomerfide, “how you iove to such a degree that the excess of your love may be mischievous both to you and to him. There is a medium in all things, and for want of a right understanding love is often converted into hatred.”

“It seems to me,” said Simontault, “that you have not

pushed the matter so far without purposing to confirm your principle by some example. Therefore, if you know one, let us hear it."

"Well then, my tale shall be short and ay, as usual," replied Nomerfide.

NOVEL LXVIII.

A woman gives her husband powder of cantharides to make him love her, and goes near to killing him.

THERE was formerly at Pau, in Bearn, an apothecary whose name was Maître Etienne. He had married a good thrifty woman, with such a share of beauty as ought to have contented him; but as he tasted different drugs, so too he had a mind to taste different women, the better to judge of all. This was so disagreeable to his wife that she lost all patience, for he never noticed her except in Passion Week, by way of penance. The apothecary being one day in his shop, and his wife hid behind the door, listening, in came a woman of the place, who was *commère** to the apothecary, and was sick of the same complaint as the listener behind the door. "Alas! *compère*, my friend," she said to the apothecary, sighing deeply, "I am the most unfortunate woman in the world. I love my husband more than myself. I have not a thought but how to serve and obey him; but it is all labor in vain, and he loves the worst and nastiest woman in the town better than he does me. If you know any drug that can change his constitution, pray give it me, *compère*. If it succeeds with me, and I am well treated by my husband, I assure you I will recompense you to the utmost of my power."

The apothecary, to comfort her, told her he knew of a

* In France, the godfather and godmother of a child are called in reference to each other *compère* and *commère*, terms which imply mutual relations of a peculiarly friendly kind. The same usage exists in all Catholic countries. One of the novels in the Decameron is founded on a very general opinion in Italy that an amorous connexion between a *compadre* and *commadre* partook almost of the nature of incest.

marvelous powder, and that if she made her husband take it in his broth or in his roast meat, like *duc* powder, he would regale her in the best possible manner. The poor woman, wishing to see this miracle, asked him what it was, and if she could not have some of it. He told her she had only to take some powder of cantharides, of which he had good store. Before they parted she made him prepare this powder, and took as much of it as she needed; and subsequently she thanked him for it many times; for her husband, who was strong and vigorous, and who did not take too much of it, found himself none the worse for it, and she all the better.

The apothecary's wife, who had overheard the whole conversation, thought to herself that she had no less need of the recipe than his *commère*. She marked the place where her husband put away the rest of the powder, and resolved to use it when an occasion should offer. She had not long to wait. Her husband, feeling himself incommoded with a coldness of stomach, begged her to make him some good broth. She told him that a roast with *duc* powder would do him still more good, and he begged her to make him one forthwith, and to get some cinnamon and some sugar out of the shop. She did so, and did not forget the remainder of the powder which he had given to his *commère*, without regarding either weight, or dose, or measure. The husband ate the roast, which he found very good, and soon experienced its effect, which he thought to appease with his wife; but it was impossible, for he felt all on fire, so that he did not know on what side to turn. He told his wife she had poisoned him, and insisted on knowing what she had put in the broth. She did not disguise the truth, but told him plainly that she had as much need of that recipe as his *commère*. The poor apothecary was in such torture that he could not belabor her with anything harder than bad words. He ordered her out of his sight, and sent her to the Queen of Navarre's apothecary to beg he would come and see him, which he did, and administered the remedies suitable to the case. The queen's apothecary set the patient on his legs again in a very little time, and censured him sharply for making another take drugs which he would not willingly take himself; adding, that his wife had done as she ought, seeing the desire she had to make herself loved by him. The poor man

was obliged to have patience, and own that God had justly punished him in exposing him to the raillery to which he would have subjected another.

To me, it seems, ladies, that this woman's love was not less indiscreet than excessive.

"Do you call it loving her husband," said Hircan, "to make him suffer for the pleasure she expected of him?"

"I imagine," said Longarine, "she had no other intention than to regain her husband's regard, which she thought she had lost. There is nothing women would not do for such a blessing."

"Nevertheless," said Geburon, "in matters of food and drink, a woman ought on no account whatever to give her husband anything of which she is not sure, as well by her own experience as by that of persons of knowledge, that it can do him no harm; but ignorance must be excused. The woman in question was excusable, for the passion which blinds people most is love, and the person most blinded is the woman who has not the strength to carry such a great burden judiciously."

"Geburon," replied Oisille, "you depart from your own good custom to conform to the sentiments of your companions. Yet there are women who have patiently sustained love and jealousy."

"Ay," said Hircan, "and pleasantly too; for the most sensible are those who take as much pleasure in laughing at their husbands' doings, as the husbands in secretly playing them false. If you will allow me to speak before Madame Oisille closes the day, I will tell you a tale about a husband and a wife who are known to all the company."

"Begin, then," said Nomerfide; and Hircan, laughing, began thus.

NOVEL LXIX.

An Italian suffered himself to be duped by his servant maid, and was caught by his wife bolting meal in place of the girl.

At the château of Odoz, in Bigorre, dwelt one of the king's equerries, named Charles, an Italian. He had married a very good and virtuous lady, who had grown old after bearing him several children. He, too, was not young, and lived on peaceable and friendly terms with his wife. It is true he sometimes talked to his women servants, which his good wife pretended never to observe, but she always dismissed the girls very quietly when she knew that they had forgotten their station in the house. One day she took one who was an honest, good girl, told her what was her husband's humor and her own, and warned her that she would turn off a girl the moment she knew she was not well behaved. The servant, being anxious to remain in her mistress's service and gain her esteem, resolved not to swerve from the path of virtue. Though her master often addressed improper language to her, she never would hearken to him, but told all to her mistress, who laughed with her at her husband's folly.

One day the servant was bolting meal in a back room, with her surcoat over her head after the manner of the country. This surcoat is made like a *crèmeau*, but it completely covers the back and shoulders. Her master, finding her in that trim, was very pressing with her; and she, who would as soon have died as done what he wished, pretended to consent, and begged he would first let her go and see whether or not her mistress was engaged in any way, so that they might not be surprised by her. He willingly consented to this, and then she begged him to put on her surcoat and continue to bolt during her absence, so that her mistress might not miss the sound of the bolting machine. This he did with glee, in the hope of having what he desired. The servant, who loved a good laugh, ran to her mistress, and said, "Come and see your husband, whom I have taught to bolt, in order to get rid of

him." The wife made haste to see this new servant, and found her husband with the surcoat on his head, working away at the bolting machine, and laughed at him so heartily, clapping her hands, that it was as much as she could do to say to him, "How much a month dost thou ask for wages, wench?" The husband, hearing his wife's voice, and seeing that he was duped, threw away the surcoat and the bolting machine, and darted at the servant, whom he called all sorts of bad names. If his wife had not interposed he would have paid her for her court-esy; however, the storm was at last appeased to the content of all parties, who afterwards lived peaceably together.*

What say you of this wife, ladies? Was she not wise to make sport of her husband's sport?

"It was no sport for the husband to miss his aim," said Saffredent.

"I imagine," said Ennasuite, "that he had more pleasure in laughing with his wife than in half killing himself with his servant at his age."

"I should have been sorely annoyed to have been found with that fine *crèmeau* over my head," said Simontault.

"I have heard," said Parlamente, "that it was not your wife's fault that she did not catch you pretty nearly in the same trim; and since that time, they say, she has never known rest."

"Be content with the adventures of your own house," replied Simontault, "without looking after mine. My wife has no cause to complain of me; but even if I were such as you say, she would not notice it, for she is not at all stinted."

"Women of honor need nothing but the love of their husbands, the only persons who can content them," said Longarine; "but those who desire a brutal pleasure will never find it where propriety prescribes."

"Do you call it brutal pleasure when a woman wishes to have from her husband what belongs to her?" said Geburon.

"I maintain," replied Longarine, "that a chaste wife, who loves truly, finds more contentment in being perfectly loved, than in all the pleasures which the flesh can desire."

* This is the same story as *Le Conseilleur au Bluteau*, the 18th of the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*.

"I am of your opinion," said Dagoucin; "but their lordships here will neither hear of it nor confess it. I believe that if mutual love does not content a woman, a husband will content her no more; for if she does not conform in love to the seemly ways of women, she must be possessed by the infernal lust of the brutes."

"Truly you remind me," said Oisille, "of a fair lady who was well married, and who, for want of contenting herself with that seemly love, became more carnal than swine, and more cruel than lions."

"I pray you, madam, to finish the day by telling us that story," said Simontault.

"I cannot, for two reasons," replied Oisille: "first, because it is long; and secondly, because it is not of our time. It has been written, however, by an author worthy of credit; but we are vowed to relate nothing here that has been written."

"That is true," observed Parlamente; "but as I believe I know the tale you mean, I must tell you it is written in such antiquated language that I do not think any one present, except us two, has heard of it. Therefore it will be as good as new."

The whole company then besought her to tell the story without troubling herself about its length, for they had still a good hour to spare before vespers. Madame Oisille, therefore, yielded to their entreaties, and began as follows.

NOVEL LXX.

The horrible incontinence and malice of a duchess of Burgundy was the cause of her death, and of that of two persons who fondly loved each other.

THERE was in the duchy of Burgundy a duke who was a very agreeable prince and of very goodly person. He had a wife with whose beauty he was so satisfied that it blinded him to her disposition, and he thought only of pleasing her, whilst she, on her part, made a show of responding only to

his affection. This duke had in his household a young gentleman so accomplished in all that can be desired in a man, that he was loved by everybody, and especially by the duke, about whose person he had been brought up from childhood, and who, knowing him to possess so many perfections, had the warmest regard for him, and trusted him in all affairs suitable to his years. The duchess, who was not a virtuous woman, nor satisfied with her husband's love and the kind treatment she received from him, often cast her eyes on this gentleman, and found him so much to her taste, that she loved him beyond measure. She was evermore trying to make this known to him by languishing and tender glances, sighs, and impassioned airs; but the gentleman, who never studied anything but virtue, knew nought of vice in a lady who had so little excuse for it; so that the glances, sighs, and impassioned airs of the poor wanton brought her nothing but bitter disappointment. She carried her extravagance so far, that, forgetting she was a wife who ought, though solicited, to grant no favor, and a princess who was made to be adored, yet disdain such servants, she resolved to act like a man transported with passion, and to discharge her bosom of a burden that was insupportable.

One day then, when the duke went to council, to which the gentleman was not admitted, being too young, she beckoned to him, and he came, thinking she had some order to give him. Leaning then on his arm, like a woman wearied by too much repose, she walked about with him in a gallery, and said, "I am surprised that, being as you are, young, handsome, and full of engaging qualities, you have been able hitherto to live in continual intercourse with so many fair ladies without loving any of them." And then, with one of her most gracious looks, she paused for his answer.

"Madam," he replied, "if I were worthy that your greatness should descend to think of me, you would have more reason for surprise, to see so insignificant a man as I am offer his services only to meet with refusal or mockery."

Upon this discreet reply the duchess loved him more than ever, and vowed that there was not a lady in the court but would be too happy to have a lover of his merit; that he might try, and that she assured him he would succeed with-

out difficulty. The gentleman kept his eyes constantly bent on the ground, not daring to look on the countenance of the duchess, which glowed enough to warm an icicle. Just when he was about to excuse himself, the duke sent for the duchess to come to the council upon an affair in which she was interested. She went with much regret. As for the gentleman, he pretended not to have understood what she said, which vexed and confused her so much that she knew not what to impute it to but the silly fear with which she thought the young man possessed. Seeing, then, that he did not understand her language, she resolved a few days afterwards to overleap fear and shame, and declare her passion to him in plain terms, never doubting but that beauty like hers could not fail to be well received. Nevertheless, she would have been glad to have had the honor to be solicited ; but, after all, she preferred pleasure to honor.

After having several times again tried the same means she had first essayed, and always with the same unwelcome result, she plucked him by the sleeve one day, and told him she wanted to speak to him on an affair of importance. With all due respect and humility the gentleman followed her to a window recess, where, finding that she could not be seen from the chamber, she resumed the subject of her past conversation with a trembling voice, indicative alike of desire and fear. She reproached him for not having yet made choice of a lady, and assured him that wherever he fixed his affections she would spare no pains to ensure his success. The gentleman, not less distressed than astonished at such language, replied, " My heart is so tender, madam, that if I were once refused I should never know joy ; and I am so well aware of my slender merit, that I am sure there is no lady in the court who would accept my services."

The duchess blushed at these words, and imagining that his heart was lost, protested he had only to wish, and she would answer for it that she knew the fairest lady in the court who would receive him with extreme joy, and make him consummately happy. " I do not believe, madam," he replied, " that there is any woman in this court so unfortunate and so infatuated as to have made me the object of her predilections."

Seeing that he would not understand her, she proceeded to

give him a more direct glimpse of her passion; and as the gentleman's virtue gave her cause for fear, she spoke by way of interrogation. "If fortune," she said, had so favored you that it was myself who was thus well inclined to you, what would you say?"

The gentleman, who thought he was dreaming to hear her speak thus, dropped on one knee on the ground and replied, "When God shall do me the grace, madam, to make me possessor of the good-will of the duke my master, and of yourself, I shall deem myself the happiest of men. It is the sole recompense I crave for my faithful services, bound as I am above all others to sacrifice my life for you both. I am convinced, madam, that the love you have for my lord your spouse is so pure and great, that not even the greatest prince and the most accomplished man in the world, to say nothing of myself, who am but a worm of the earth, could impair the union that subsists between my master and you. As for me, whom he has nurtured from childhood and made what I am, I would not for my life entertain a thought other than that which becomes a faithful servant as regards either his wife, sister, or mother."

The duchess would not suffer him to proceed, but seeing she was in danger of receiving a shameful refusal, she broke in upon him suddenly, "Wicked and arrogant fool! who requires any such thing of you? Because you are good-looking you imagine that the very flies are enamored of you; but if you were presumptuous enough to address yourself to me, I would soon let you know that I love, and will love, none but my husband. I have spoken to you as I have done only for my diversion, to sift you, and make you my laughing-stock, as I do all amorous coxcombs."

"I have all along been assured that it was just as you say, madam," replied the gentleman.

She would hear no more, but turned abruptly from him, and to avoid her ladies who followed her into her chamber, she shut herself up in her closet, where she gave way to an indescribable burst of bitter feeling. On the one hand, the love in which she had failed caused her mortal sadness; and on the other, her despatch against herself for entering upon so injudicious a dialogue, and against the gentleman for having answered so prudently, put her into such a fury that at one moment she

wished to kill herself, at the next she would live to be revenged on him she regarded as her deadliest enemy. After a long fit of tears she feigned indisposition, to avoid appearing at the duke's supper, at which the gentleman was usually in attendance. The duke, who loved his wife more than himself, failed not to go and see her ; when, in order to arrive the more easily at her ends, she told him she believed she was pregnant, and that her pregnancy had caused a rheum to fall upon her eyes, which gave her great pain. The duchess kept her bed for two or three hours in so sad and melancholy a mood, that the duke suspected there was something else the matter besides pregnancy. He went to sleep with her that night ; but seeing that, in spite of all the caresses he could bestow upon her, she continued to sigh incessantly, he said, " You know, my dear, that I love you as my own life, and that if you die I cannot possibly survive you. If, then, you value my health and life, tell me, I entreat, what makes you sigh thus ; for I cannot believe that pregnancy alone can produce that effect."

The duchess, seeing her husband in the very mood she wished, hastened to turn it to her vengeful purpose. " Alas ! monsieur," she said, embracing him with tears, " my worst suffering is to see you the dupe of those whose duty it is to preserve your honor and all that is yours." This made the duke wondrously eager to know what she meant, and he begged her to speak openly, without fear or disguise. " I shall never be surprised," she said at last, after repeated refusals, " if strangers make war on princes, since those who are most bound to them undertake to wage such a horrible war against them, that the loss of domains is nothing in comparison with it. I say this, monsieur, with reference to a gentleman " (here she named her enemy) " whom you have fed, reared, treated more like a relation than a domestic, and who, by way of gratitude, has had the impudence and the baseness to attempt the honor of your wife, on which depends that of your house and your children. Though he long labored to insinuate to me things that left me no doubt of his black perfidy, yet my heart, which is only for you, and thinks only on you, could not comprehend him ; but at last he explained himself, and I replied to him as my rank and my honor required. I hate him, however, so that I cannot bear the sight of him ; and this it was, monsieur,

which made me keep my room and lose the happiness of your company. I beseech you, monsieur, not to keep such a pestilence near you ; for after such a crime, the fear of your being made acquainted with it might very likely induce him to do something worse. You know now, monsieur, the cause of my grief, which seems to me most just and most worthy that you should right it without delay."

The duke, who on the one hand loved his wife and felt himself outraged, and on the other hand loved the gentleman, of whose fidelity he had often had practical proof, could hardly believe that this lie was truth. He withdrew to his chamber in great perplexity and anger, and sent word to the gentleman that he was not to appear any more in his presence, but was to retire to his own home for some time. The gentleman, ignorant of the cause of an order so peremptory and so unexpected, was the more keenly affected by it, as he thought he had deserved the very opposite treatment. Conscious of his innocence in heart and deed, he got one of his comrades to speak to the duke on his behalf, and deliver him a letter, wherein he most humbly entreated, that if he had the misfortune to be removed from his master's presence, in consequence of some report to his prejudice, the duke would have the goodness to suspend his judgment until he should have inquired into the truth ; and then he durst hope it would be found he had in nowise offended. This letter somewhat appeased the duke ; he sent for the gentleman to come secretly to his chamber, and said to him with great gravity, "I could never have believed that after having had you nurtured like my own child, I should have cause to repent of having so highly advanced you, forasmuch as you have sought to outrage me in a manner that would have been worse to me than the loss of life and fortune, namely, by attempting the honor of her who is the half of myself, and seeking to cover my house with perpetual infamy. You may believe that I feel this insult so deeply, that if I was quite sure that the fact was true, you would by this time be at the bottom of the water, to punish you secretly for the affront you have secretly sought to put upon me."

The gentleman was not dismayed by this speech ; on the contrary, he spoke with the confidence of innocence, and besought the duke to have the goodness to tell him who was his

accuser, the accusation being one of those which are better discussed with the lance than with the tongue. "Your accuser," replied the duke, "has no other arms than her chastity. It was my wife, and no one else, who told me this, praying me to take vengeance upon you."

Amazed as the poor gentleman was at the prodigious malice of the duchess, he would not accuse her, but contented himself with saying, "My lady may say what she pleases. You know her, monsieur, better than I; and you know if I have seen her elsewhere than in your company, except once only when she spoke to me a very little. Your judgment is as sound as that of any prince in Christendom. Therefore, my liege, I beseech you to consider if you have ever seen anything in me which can have caused you suspicion. It is a fire which it is impossible long to conceal in such wise that those who labor under the same malady shall not have some inkling of it. I beg, my liege, that you will be graciously pleased to believe two things of me; one is, that I am so true to you, that though my lady your spouse were the finest woman in the world, love would not be capable of making me do anything contrary to my honor and my duty; the other is, that even were she not your spouse, she is, of all the women I have ever seen, the one I should be the least inclined to love; and there are enough of others on whom I should sooner fix my choice."

The duke's anger was somewhat mitigated by these words. "Well," said he, "I did not believe it; so you may go on as usual, with the assurance that if I find that the truth is on your side, I will love you more than ever; but if the contrary appears, your life is in my hand." The gentleman thanked him, and declared his willingness to submit to the severest penalty his master could devise if he were found guilty."

The duchess, seeing the gentleman continue to serve as usual, could not patiently endure it, and said to her husband, "It would be no more than you deserve, monsieur, if you were poisoned, since you have more confidence in your mortal enemies than in your nearest friends."

"Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear," replied the duke; "for if it appears that what you have told me is true, I assure you he has not twenty-four hours to live. But as he has protested the contrary to me on oath, and as, besides, I never

perceived anything of the sort, I cannot believe it without good proofs."

"Truly, monsieur," she returned, "your goodness makes my malice greater. What greater proof would you have than that a man like him has never had any amour imputed to him. Be assured, monsieur, that but for the vain and presumptuous idea with which he has flattered himself of becoming my servant, he would not be without a mistress at this time of the day. Never did a young man live so solitary as he in good company; and the reason can only be that his heart is set so high that his vain hope stands him in stead of everything else. If you believe that he conceals nothing from you, swear him as to his amours. If he tells you that he loves another, why then believe him; I am content you should; but if not, be assured that what I say is true."

The duke approved of his wife's suggestion, and taking the gentleman into the country, said to him, "My wife continues still to speak to me of you to the same purpose, and mentions a circumstance which gives me some suspicion. To be plain with you, it excites surprise that you, a young and gallant man, have never been known to be in love; and this very thing makes me fear that you entertain the sentiments you have been charged with, and the hope you cherish is so pleasing to you that you cannot think of any other woman. I pray you then as a friend, and order you as a master, to tell me truly do you pay your court to any lady in this world?"

The poor gentleman, who would fain have concealed his love as carefully as he would have preserved his life, seeing his master's extreme jealousy, was constrained to swear to him that he loved a lady so beautiful that the beauty of the duchess and of all the ladies of her suite was mean in comparison, not to say ugliness and deformity; at the same time he besought the duke not to insist on his naming the lady, because the intimacy between him and his mistress was such that it could only be broken by whichever of the two first disclosed it. The duke promised he would never press him on that point, and was so satisfied with him, that he behaved more graciously to him than ever. The duchess perceived it, and employed her usual artifices to find out the reason; nor did the duke conceal it from her. Strong jealousy was now added to her thirst

of vengeance, and she besought the duke to insist that the gentleman should name his mistress, declaring that if he refused to do so, her husband would be the most credulous prince in the world to put faith in so vague a statement.

The poor prince, who was led by his wife as she pleased, went and walked alone with the gentleman, and told him he was in still greater embarrassment than ever, being afraid that what he had told him was only an excuse to hinder him from coming at the truth, which made him more uneasy than before ; therefore he besought him most earnestly to tell him the name of her he loved so much. The poor gentleman implored the duke not to constrain him to break the promise he had given to a person he loved as his life, and which he had kept inviolate until that moment. It would be tantamount to requiring him to lose in one day what he had preserved for more than seven years, and he would rather die than do that wrong to a person who was so faithful to him. His refusal threw the duke into such a violent fit of jealousy, that he exclaimed furiously, "Take your choice : either tell me the name of her you love above all others, or quit my dominions on pain of death if you are found in them after eight days."

If ever faithful servant was smitten with keen anguish it was this poor gentleman, who might well say, *Angustiae sunt mihi undique*. On the one hand, if he told the truth he lost his mistress, should it come to her knowledge that he had broken his word to her ; on the other, if he did not tell it, he was exiled from the country where she resided, and could never see her more. Thus pressed on all sides, a cold sweat broke out upon him, as if his anguish had brought him to the brink of the grave. The duke, perceiving his embarrassment, imagined he loved only the duchess, and that his confusion arose from the fact that he could not name any one else. In this belief he said to him sternly, "If you had told me the truth, you would have less difficulty in doing what I desire ; but I believe that it is your crime that occasions your embarrassment."

The gentleman, stung by these words, and urged by the love he bore his master, resolved to tell him the truth, assuring himself that the duke was a man of so much honor that he would keep his secret inviolate. He fell on his knees then,

and said to him, with his hands pressed together, "My liege, the obligations I am under to you, and the love I bear you, constrain me more than the fear of death. You are possessed with so false a prejudice against me, that, to undeceive you, I am resolved to tell you what no torments could extort from me. The only favor I ask of you, my liege, is, that you will swear, on the faith of a prince and a Christian, never to reveal the secret which you force from me. The duke promised him, with all the oaths he could think of, never to tell his secret to any one, either by word, act, or signs; and the gentleman, relying on the good faith of a prince whom he knew, put the first hand to his own undoing, saying to him, "It is seven years, my lord, since having known your niece, the Lady du Verger, as a widow and disengaged, I tried to acquire her good-will. As I was not of birth to marry her, I contented myself with being received by her as a lover, in which I succeeded. Our intercourse has been conducted hitherto with so much prudence, that no one has come to the knowledge of it except you, my lord, into whose hands I put my life and honor, entreating you to keep the secret, and to have no less esteem for my lady your niece, than whom I do not think there is under heaven a creature more perfect."

The duke was delighted with this declaration, for knowing the extraordinary beauty of his niece, he doubted not that she was more capable of pleasing than his wife. But not conceiving it possible that such a mystery should have been carried on without adequate means, he begged to know how her lover managed to see her. The gentleman told him that his mistress's chamber opened on a garden, and that on the days when he was to visit her a little gate was left open, through which he entered on foot, and advanced until he heard the barking of a little dog, which the lady let loose in the garden after her women had all retired; that then he went to her, and conversed with her all night, and on his departure appointed the day when he was to come again in which he had never failed, except for indispensable reasons. The duke, who was the most curious of men, and who had been very gallant in his time, begged him, as well to dissipate his suspicions as for the pleasure of hearing so singular an adventure recounted, to take him with him, not as a master, but as a

companion, the next time he went thither. The gentleman, having gone so far, assented, and told him his assignation was for that very day. The duke was as glad of this as if he had won a kingdom, and feigning to retire to his *garderobe* to rest, had two horses brought, one for the gentleman and the other for himself, and they travelled all night from Argilly, where the duke resided, to Le Verger, where they left their horses at the entrance of the park.

The gentleman made the duke enter through the little gate, and begged him to place himself behind a large walnut-tree, whence he might see if what he had told him was true or not. They had not been long in the garden before the little dog began to bark, and the gentleman walked towards the tower, whilst the lady advanced to meet him. She saluted him with an embrace, and told him it seemed a thousand years since she had seen him. Then they entered the chamber, the door of which they locked. The duke having seen the whole of this mystery, felt more satisfied; nor had he time to grow weary, for the gentleman told the lady that he was obliged to leave her sooner than usual, because the duke was going to the chase at four o'clock, and he durst not fail to attend him. The lady, who preferred honor to pleasure, did not attempt to hinder him from doing his duty; for what she prized most in their honorable intimacy was that it was a secret for all mankind.

The gentleman quitted the house at one o'clock in the morning, and his lady, in mantle and kerchief, escorted him not so far as she wished, for he made her go back for fear she should meet the duke, with whom he mounted again and returned to the château of Argilly. On the way, the duke never ceased protesting to the gentleman that he would rather die than ever divulge his secret; and his confidence in him was so confirmed, that no one at court stood higher in favor. The duchess was enraged at this. The duke forbade her ever to mention the subject any more to him, saying that he knew the truth, and was satisfied, for the lady whom the gentleman loved was handsomer than herself. Those words so stung the heart of the duchess that they threw her into an illness worse than fever. The duke tried to console her, but nothing would do unless he would tell her who was that fair lady who was so

devotedly loved. So much did she importune him, that at last he quitted the chamber, saying to her, "If you speak to me any more of these things, we will part." This made her still more ill, and she pretended to feel her infant move; whereat the duke was so rejoiced that he went to bed to her; but when she saw that his passion for her was at the height, she turned from him, saying, "Since you love neither wife nor child, monsieur, I entreat you let both die." These words she accompanied with so many tears and cries, that the duke was greatly afraid she would miscarry; wherefore, taking her in his arms, he entreated her to tell him what she wanted, protesting he had nothing that was not at her command. "Ah! monsieur," she replied, sobbing and crying, "what hope can I have that you would do a difficult thing for me, since you will not do the easiest and most reasonable thing in the world, which is to tell me the name of the mistress of the worst servant you ever had? I thought that you and I had but one heart, one soul, and one flesh, but I see that you regard me as a stranger, since you conceal your secrets from me as if I were an alien. You have confided to me many important secrets, and have never known that I divulged a tittle of them. You have had such proof that I have no will but yours, that you ought not to doubt but that I am more you than myself. If you have sworn never to tell any one the gentleman's secret, you do not violate your oath in telling it to me, for I neither am nor can be other than yourself. I have you in my heart; I hold you between my arms; I have a child in my womb in whom you live; yet I cannot have your love as you have mine. The more faithful I am to you, the more cruel and austere you are to me. This makes me long a thousand times for the day when a sudden death may deliver your child from such a father, and me from such a spouse. I hope it will soon come, since you prefer a faithless servant to your wife, to the mother of a child which is your own, and which is on the point of perishing because you will not tell me what I have the greatest longing to know."

So saying, she embraced and kissed her husband, watering his face with her tears, and sobbing and crying so violently, that the poor prince, fearing he should lose both mother and child, resolved to tell her the truth; but he swore that if ever

she mentioned it to any one in the world she should die by no hand but his own. She accepted the condition ; and then the poor abused duke told her all he had seen from beginning to end. She pretended to be satisfied, but in her heart it was quite otherwise. However, as she was afraid of the duke, she dissembled her passion as well as she could.

The duke, holding his court on a great feast-day, had called to it all the ladies of the country, his niece among the rest. After the banquet the dances began, and every one did his devoir ; but the duchess was too much vexed by the sight of her niece's beauty and grace to enjoy herself, or hide her spleen. Making all the ladies sit down, she turned the conversation on love ; but seeing that Madame du Verger said not a word, she said to her, with a heart rankling with jealousy, "And you, fair niece, is it possible that your beauty is without a lover?"

"Madam," replied the Lady du Verger, "my beauty has not yet produced that effect ; for since my husband's death I have had no lovers but his children ; nor do I desire any others."

"Fair niece, fair niece," rejoined the duchess, with execrable spite, "there is no love so secret as not to be known, nor any little dog so well trained as not to be heard to bark."

I leave you to imagine the anguish of poor Madame du Verger at finding that an affair she had thought so secret was published to her shame. The thought of her honor, so carefully guarded, and so unhappily lost, was torture to her ; but the worst was her fear that her lover had broken his word to her, which she did not believe he could ever have done unless he loved some fairer lady, and in doting fondness had suffered her to extort the secret from him. However, she had so much self-command that she did not let her emotion be seen, but laughingly replied that she did not understand the language of brutes. But her heart was so wrung with grief that she rose, and, passing through the duchess's chamber, entered a *garderobe* in sight of the duke, who was walking about. Thinking herself alone, she threw herself on a bed. A demoiselle, who had sat down beside it to sleep, roused herself and peeped through the curtains to see who it might be, and perceiving it was the duke's niece, who thought herself alone, she durst not speak, but remained as still as possible to listen,

whilst the poor lady in a dying voice thus began her lamentation :

“Alas ! what have I heard ! What words of death have smitten my ears ! O thou who was loved as man was never loved before, is this the reward of my chaste and virtuous love ? O my heart ! hast thou made so dangerous a choice, and attached thyself to the most faithless, artful, and mischievous-tongued of all men, mistaking him for the most faithful, upright, and secret ? Is it possible, alas ! that a thing hidden from all the world has been revealed to the duchess ? My little dog, so well trained, sole agent of my long and virtuous friendship, it was not you that betrayed my secret : it was a man, with a voice more piercing than a dog’s, and a heart more ungrateful than any beast’s. It was he who, contrary to his oath and his word, divulged the happy life we long led without injuring any one. O my friend ! for whom alone my heart cherished love, a love wherewith my life has been preserved, has the beauty of the duchess metamorphosed you, as that of Circe did her lovers ? Has she turned you from virtue to vice, from good to bad, from a man into a savage beast ? O my friend ! though you have broken your word to me, I will keep mine, and never see you more after having revealed our intimacy. But as I cannot live without seeing you, I willingly yield to the excess of my sorrow, and will never seek any remedy for it either from reason or from medicine. Death alone shall end it, and that death will be more welcome to me than to remain in the world without my lover, without honor, and without contentment. Neither war nor death has taken my lover from me ; my sins and transgressions have not deprived me of honor ; nor has my bad conduct bereft me of happiness. It is cruel fortune that has made an ingrate of the most favored of all men, and has brought upon me the contrary of what I deserved. O duchess, how delighted you were to make that jeering allusion to my little dog ! Revel in a bliss that belongs to me alone. Laugh at her who thought to escape derision whilst loving virtuously and concealing it with care. How that word wrung my heart ! How it made me red with shame and pale with jealousy ! Heart, heart, I feel thou art undone. Ill-requited love burns thee, jealousy and grief turn thee to ice, and forbid thee all consolation. Through having

too much adored the creature, my soul has forgotten the Creator. It must return to Him from whom a vain love detached it. Be assured, my soul, thou wilt find a Father more tender than the friend for whom thou hast often forgotten Him. O God, my creator, who art the true and perfect love, by whose grace the love I have borne my friend has been sullied by no vice, save that of loving too much, be pleased to receive in the greatness of Thy mercy the soul and spirit of her who repents of having broken Thy first and righteous command. Through the merits of Him whose love is incomprehensible, forgive the fault which excess of love made me commit, for my trust is in Thee alone. Farewell, my friend, whose unworthiness of that name breaks my heart." So saying she fell backwards, her face ghastly, her lips blue, and her extremities cold.

At the same moment the gentlemen she loved entered the reception-room, where the duchess was dancing with the other ladies. He looked round for his mistress, and not seeing her, went into the duchess's chamber, where he found the duke, who, guessing his purpose, whispered him that she was gone into the *garderobe*, and appeared to be unwell. The gentleman asked for leave to follow her, and the duke not only granted it, but urged him to do so. Entering the *garderobe* then, he found her at the last gasp; and, throwing his arms round her, he said, "What is this, my love? Do you want to quit me?" Roused by the well-known voice, the poor lady opened her eyes to look upon him who was the cause of her death; but that look so increased her love and her anguish, that with a piteous sigh she gave up the ghost.

The gentleman, more dead than alive, asked the demoiselle how the lady's illness had begun, and she told him all she had heard. He then knew that the duke had revealed his secret. His grief was so intense, that, embracing the body of his mistress, he wept over it long in silence, and at last exclaimed, "Traitor, villain, wretch that I am! Why has not the penalty for my treachery fallen on me, and not on her who was innocent? Why did not Heaven's lightning blast me the day my tongue revealed our secret and virtuous love? Why did not the earth open to swallow up a wretch who violated his faith? May my tongue be punished as was that of the wicked rich

man in hell ! O heart, that too much feared death and exile, may eagles tear thee perpetually as they did that of Ixion ! * Alas, my dear friend ! in thinking to hold you fast, I have lost you. I thought to possess you long alive, with virtue and pleasure, and I embrace you dead, and you have been dissatisfied to your last gasp with me, my heart, and my tongue. O most faithful of women ! I denounce myself as the most inconstant, faithless, and perfidious of men. I would I could complain of the duke, whose word I trusted, hoping by that means to prolong our agreeable life ; but ought I not to have known that no one could keep my secret better than myself ? The duke was more justifiable in telling his secret to his wife, than I in telling mine to him. I am the only guilty one, the only one who deserves to be punished for the greatest crime ever committed between friends. I ought to have suffered him to throw me into the river as he threatened. You at least, dear one, would then be alive, and I should have closed my life with the glory of having observed the rule prescribed by true friendship ; but having broken it I live still, and you are dead for having perfectly loved. Your pure heart could not know the baseness of mine, and live. O my God, why didst thou create me with a love so frivolous and a heart so ignorant ? Why was I not the little dog that faithfully served its mistress ? Alas ! my little friend, I used to feel joy at the sound of your barking ; but that joy is turned into sorrow, for having been the cause of another besides us two hearing your voice. Yet, sweetheart, neither love of the duchess nor of any other woman ever made me vary, though the wicked duchess has often solicited me to love her ; but ignorance has undone me, for I thought by what I did to insure our intimacy for ever. But that ignorance does not make me the less guilty. I have revealed my mistress's secret, I have broken my word, and therefore it is that she is dead before me. Alas, sweetheart, will death be less cruel to me than to you, who have died only for having loved ? Methinks death would not deign to touch my faithless and miserable heart. The loss of honor, and the memory of her I have lost through my fault, are more insupportable to me than ten thousand deaths. If any one

* The poor gentleman had but a confused knowledge of Greek fable, or grief had muddled his recollection of it.

had cut short your days through mischance or malice, I should use my sword to avenge you. It is not reasonable, then, that I should pardon that murderer, who has caused your death by a deed more vile than if he had killed you with a sword. If I knew a more odious executioner than myself, I would entreat him to do justice upon your perfidious lover. O love ! I have offended thee from not having known how to love ; and therefore thou wilt not succour me as thou hast succoured her who perfectly kept all they laws. Nor is it just that I should make such a glorious end : it must be by my own hand. I have washed your face with my tears ; I have implored your pardon ; and it now only remains that my arm make my body like yours, and sent my soul whither yours is gone, in the assurance that a virtuous and honorable love end neither in this world nor in the next."

Starting up then, like a frantic man, from the corpse, he drew his poniard, and stabbed himself to the heart ; and then, clasping his mistress in his arms for the second time, he kissed her so fondly, that he seemed more like a blissful lover than a dead man. The demoiselle seeing the deed, ran to the door and screamed for help. The duke, suspecting the disaster of those he loved, was the first to enter the *garderobe*, and on seeing that sad couple he tried to separate them, in order to save the gentleman if it were possible ; but he held his mistress so fast, that it was impossible to tear him from her until he had expired. Nevertheless, hearing the duke exclaim, " My God ! who has been the cause of this ? " " My tongue and yours, monsieur," he replied, with a look of fury. So saying he breathed his last, with his face laid on that of his mistress.

The duke, wishing to know more of the matter, constrained the demoiselle to tell him all she had seen and heard, which she did from beginning to end, without forgetting anything. The duke then, knowing that he was the cause of the whole mischief, threw himself on the bodies of the two lovers, and with cries and tears implored their pardon. He kissed them repeatedly ; and then rising furiously, he drew the poniard out of the gentleman's body. As a wild boar wounded by a spear runs impetuously at him who has struck the blow, so ran the duke at her who had wounded him to the soul. He found her still dancing in the reception-room, and *gayer* than usual,

cause she thought she had so well revenged herself on the Lady du Verger. Her husband seized her in the midst of the dance, and said, "You took the secret upon your life, and upon your life shall fall the forfeiture." So saying he grasped her by her head-dress, and buried the poniard in her bosom.

The astonished company thought the duke was out of his senses; but he had done the deed advisedly; and assembling all his servants on the spot, he recounted to them the glorious and melancholy story of his niece, and the wicked conduct of his wife: a narrative which drew tears from all his hearers. The duke then ordered that his wife should be buried in an abbey which he founded, partly with a view to atone for the sin he had committed in killing his wife; and then he had a magnificent tomb erected, in which the remains of his niece and of the gentleman were laid side by side, with an epitaph setting forth their tragic history. The duke made an expedition against the Turks, in which God so favored him that he achieved glory and profit. Finding on his return that his eldest son was of age to govern, he became a monk, and retired to the abbey in which his wife and the two lovers were buried, and there he passed his old age happily with God.*

This, ladies, is the story you begged me to relate, and which, your eyes tell me, you have not heard without compassion. It seems to me an example from which you should profit, so as to beware of fixing your affections on men. How-

* "It is probable that the Queen of Navarre has contented herself with turning into prose an old fabliau entitled *La Châtelaine de Vergy*, which is found in the fourth volume of the *Recueil de Barbasan*, and in Legrand d'Aussy's third volume. Margaret has hardly concealed the fact that she borrowed this novel, since she says in the prologue that it was written in such *old language* that none of the company could understand it except herself and Madame Oisille. The story of the Châtelaine de Vergy has also been told by Bandello (Part IV., Novel V.), and after him by Belleforest, in his *Histoires Tragiques*. It might be supposed that Margaret merely borrowed from Bandello, for it is he who lays the scene in Burgundy, at the period when that province was ruled by a duke. It is to be remarked, however, that at the end of the last epilogue of the seventh day Margaret says that the company talked at supper of nothing but *Madame du Verger*, an evident alteration of *La Châtelaine de Vergy*, the name given to the heroine in the fabliau, whilst Bandello calls her quite differently. Moreover, the Italian writer terminates the tragic story in a different manner."—*Bibliophiles Français*.

ever honorable and virtuous be that affection, it always ends badly. You see even that St. Paul would not have married people love to such excess ; for the more one is attached to earthly, the more one is detached from heavenly, things ; and the more honorable and virtuous love is, the harder is it to break its bonds. This constrains me to beg, ladies, that you will continually pray to God for His Holy Spirit, which will so inflame your hearts with the love of God, that at the hour of death it will not be hard for you to quit the things of the world, for which you have too much attachment.

"The love of these two persons being so virtuous as you represent it," said Hircan, "what need was there to make a secret of it?"

"Because," said Parlamente, "men are so depraved that they can never believe that love and virtue go hand in hand. They judge of the virtue of men and women according to their own passions, and consequently, if a woman has a dear friend other than one of her near relations, it is necessary for her to converse with him in secret if she would converse with him long. Whether a woman loves virtuously or viciously, her honor is alike doubted, because men judge only from appearances."

"But," said Geburon, "when the secrets gets vent, the woman is so much the worse thought of."

"That is true, I confess," said Longarine ; "and therefore the best course is not to love at all."

"We appeal from that sentence," said Dagoucin ; "for if we believed that the ladies were without love, we would rather be without life. I speak of those who live only to win love ; and even if it does not come to them, the hope of it supports them, and makes them do a thousand honorable things, until old age changes that fair passion into other pains. But if we thought that the ladies did not love, instead of following the profession of arms we should have to turn merchants, and instead of winning glory, to think only of amassing wealth."

"You mean to say, then," said Hircan, "that if there were no ladies we should be all caitiffs, as if we had no spirit but what they inspire us with. I am of the contrary opinion ; and I assert that nothing is more lowering to the spirit of a man than devoting himself too much to the society of women, and

loving them to excess. It was for that very reason that the Hebrews prohibited a man from going to war the year he was married, lest the love of his wife should make him recoil from the dangers he ought to seek."

"I do not think there was much sense in that law," said Saffredent, "for there is nothing that makes a man readier to leave home than being married, the reason being, that no war without is more intolerable than that within. I am convinced, that to give men a taste for going into foreign parts, and not loitering by their own firesides, nothing more need be done than to marry them."

"It is true," said Ennasuite, "that marriage exonerates them from care for the house; for that they commit to their wives, and think only of acquiring glory, relying on it that their wives will attend sufficiently to their interest."

"Be it how it may," said Saffredent, "I am very happy that you are of my opinion."

"But" observed Parlamente, "you do not discuss the most remarkable point—namely, why the gentleman who was the cause of all the mischief did not die of grief as promptly as his mistress who was innocent."

"That was because women love better than men," said Nomerfide.

"Rather," replied Simontault, "because the jealousy of women and the violence of their passion make them give up the ghost without knowing why, whilst men, with more prudence, desire to be informed of the truth. Once they have ascertained it, their good senses makes them show the greatness of their spirit. Thus it was with the gentleman, who, as soon as he knew that he was the cause of his mistress's death, manifested the greatness of his love for her at the cost of his life."

"Nevertheless," said Ennasuite, "the fidelity of her love was the cause of her death; for her heart was so constant and so true, that she could not bear to be so villianously deceived."

"Her jealousy hindered her reason from acting," returned Simontault; "and as she believed the evil of which her lover was not guilty, her death was not voluntary, for she could not help dying; but her lover owned he had done wrong, and died voluntarily."

"Be it as you please," said Nomerfide; "but at all events the love must be great that causes such mortal sorrow."

"Don't be afraid," said Hircan; "you will not die of such a fever."

"No more than you will kill yourself on being conscious of having done wrong," she retorted.

Parlemente, who did not know but that the dispute was at her expense, said, laughing, "It is enough that two died for love, without two others fighting for the same cause. There is the last vesper-bell to separate you, whether you like or not."

At these words the company rose to hear vespers. They did not forget in their prayers the souls of the true lovers, for whom the monks willingly said a *De profundis*. During supper nothing was talked of but Madame du Verger. After amusing themselves a little together they retired to their respective chambers, and so ended the seventh day.

EIGHTH DAY.

THE morning being come, they inquired how their bridge was getting on, and found that it might be completed in two or three days. This was not welcome news for some of the company, who would have been glad if the work had lasted longer, in order to protract the pleasure they enjoyed from so agreeable a mode of life. Seeing, then, that they had not more than two or three days left, they resolved to employ them well, and begged Madame Oisille to give them spiritual provender as was her wont. This she did, but detained them longer than usual, because she wished to finish the chronicle of St. John; and so well did she acquit herself of the task, that it seemed that the Holy Spirit, full of love and sweetness, spoke by her mouth. Warmed by that sacred fire they went to hear high mass. After dinner they talked of the past day, and doubted if the present one would be so well filled. They retired to their several chambers for reflection, until it was

EIGHTH DAY.

*On the Eighth Day relation is made of the greatest
yet truest follies that each can
remember.*

time to go to the meeting place, where they found the monks already stationed. When they were all seated, the question was asked who should begin. "As you have done me the honor," said Saffredent, "to make me begin two days, methinks it would be unjust to the ladies if any one of them did not also begin two."

"In that case," said Oisille, "we must either remain here a long while, or one of us ladies, or one of you gentlemen, would have to go without his or her day."

"For my part," said Dagoucin, "had I been chosen, I would have ceded my place to Saffredent."

"And I mine to Parlamente," said Nomerfide, "for I am so accustomed to serve that I know not how to command."

The company agreed to this, and Parlamente began thus: "Such good and wise tales have been told on the past days, ladies, that I should recommend our employing this one in relating the greatest follies we can think of, the same being really true. To set you going, then, I will begin in that way."

NOVEL LXXI.

A woman at the point of death flew into such a violent passion at seeing her husband kiss her servant, that she recovered.

THERE WAS at Amboise a saddler named Brimbaudier, who worked for the Queen of Navarre. It was enough to see the man's red nose to be assured that he was more a servant to Bacchus than to Diana. He had married a worthy woman, with whom he was very well satisfied, and who managed his children and his household with great discretion. One day he was told that his good wife was very ill, at which he was greatly afflicted. He went home with speed, and found her so far gone that she had more need of a confessor than of a doctor, whereat he made the most doleful lamentations that ever were heard; but to report them properly one ought to speak thick like him; but it would be better still to paint one's face. After he had rendered her all the good offices he could, she asked for the cross, which was brought her. The

good man, seeing this, threw himself on a bed howling and crying, and ejaculating with his thick tongue: "O Lord, I am losing my poor wife. Was there ever such a misfortune? What shall I do?" and so forth. At last, there being no one in the room but a young servant, rather a good-looking girl, he called her to him in a faint voice, and said, "I am dying, my dear, and worse than if I was dead all out, to see your mistress dying. I know not what to say or do, only that I look for help to you, and beg you to take care of my house and my children. Take the keys that hang at my side; do everything in the house for the best, for I am not in a condition to attend to such things."

The poor girl pitied and tried to comfort him, begging him not to be so cast down, lest besides losing her mistress she should lose her good master also. "It can't be, my dear," said he, "for I am dying. See how cold my face is; put your cheeks to mine to warm them." As she did so he put his hand on her bosom, whereat she offered to make some difficulty, but he begged her not to be alarmed, for they must by all means see each other more closely. Thereupon he laid hold of her and threw her on the bed. His wife, who was left alone with the cross and the holy water, and who had not spoken for two days, began to cry out as well as her feeble voice enabled her, "Ah! ah! ah! I am not dead yet!" And threatening them with her hand, she repeated, "Wicked wretches, I am not dead yet!"

The husband and the servant jumped up instantly, but the sick woman was so enraged with them that her anger consumed the catarrhal humor that hindered her from speaking, so that she poured out upon them all the abuse she could think of. From that moment she began to mend; but her husband had often to endure her reproaches for the little love he had shown for her.*

You see, ladies, how hypocritical men are, and how little is needed to console them for the loss of their wives.

"How do you know," said Hircan, "but he had heard it was the best remedy for his wife's case? Not being able to

* This novel has been imitated by Noël du Fail de la Hérissaye in his *Contes d'Eutrapel*, ch. v.

cure her by his care and his kind offices, he wished to try if the contrary would not produced the desired effect. The experiment was a happy one ; and I am astonished that, being a woman as you are, you have so frankly portrayed the spirit of your sex, who do for spite what they cannot be brought to do by kindness."

"Unquestionably, such provocation as that," said Longarine, "would make me rise not only from my bed but from my grave."

"What harm did he do her in consoling 'himself, since he thought she was dead?" said Saffrent. "Do we not know that marriage binds only as long as life lasts, and that death gives a man back his liberty?"

"Death releases a man from the obligation of his oath," said Oisille ; "but a good heart never thinks itself dispensed from the obligation of loving. It was making great haste to console himself not to be able to wait until his wife had expired."

"What seems strangest to me," said Nomerfide, "is that having death and the cross before his eyes, those two objects were not capable of hindering him from offending God."

"That is a fine idea," said Simontault. "So, then, you would not be shocked at a naughty thing, provided it were done out of sight of the church and the cemetery?"

"Make game of me as much as you will," replied Nomerfide, "but by your leave I maintain that the contemplation of death is enough to chill the heart, however young and fiery it may be."

"I should think as you do," said Dagoucin, "had I not heard to the contrary from a princess."

"That is as much as to say that she told you some tale to that effect," said Parlamente. "Such being the case, let us hear it."

Dagoucin began thus.

NOVEL LXXII.

Continual repentance of a nun who had lost her virginity without violence and without love.

IN one of the best towns of France after Paris there was a hospital richly endowed—that is to say, with a prioress and fifteen or sixteen nuns, and a prior with seven or eight monks, who lived opposite in another building. The latter performed service every day, and the nuns contented themselves with saying their paternosters and the hours of Our Lady, because they had enough to do in attending the sick. One day there died a poor man, about whom all the nuns were assembled. After administering all the remedies for his bodily health, they sent for one of their monks to confess him. Then, seeing that he was sinking, they gave him extreme unction, and shortly afterwards he lost his speech. But as he was a long time dying, and it was thought he could still hear, each of the nuns busied herself in saying to him the best things she could. This continued so long that at last they grew tired, and, as it was night and late, they went to bed one after the other. One of the youngest alone remained to lay out the body, with a monk of whom she stood in more awe than of the prior or any other, on account of his great austerity both in life and in conversation. After these two had shouted three hours loud and long into the poor man's ear, they were sure he had breathed his last, and they laid him out.

Whilst performing this last act of charity the monk began to talk of the wretchedness of life and the blessedness of death ; and half the night was spent in this pious discourse. The poor girl listened with great attention, and gazed at him with tears in her eyes. This gave him so much pleasure, that, whilst speaking of the life to come, he began to embrace her as if he would fain have carried her in his arms straightway to Paradise ; she listening to him always with the same rapt spirit, and not venturing to gainsay one whom she believed to be the most devout man in the convent. The wicked monk seeing this, and talking always of God, accomplished the work which

the devil had suddenly put into their hearts (for previously there had been no question of this), assuring her that a secret sin met with impunity before God ; that two persons who have no ties cannot sin in that way, provided no scandal comes of it, and to avoid any she was to be careful not to confess to any one but himself.

They separated at last, and as she passed through a chapel dedicated to Our Lady, she wished to offer her orison as usual ; but when she came to utter the words *Virgin Mary*, she recollected that she had lost her virginity without violence and without love, but through a stupid fear, and she burst into such a violent fit of tears, that it seemed as if her heart would break. The monk, who heard her sobs from a distance, suspected her conversion, and was afraid he should not again enjoy the same pleasure. To prevent that untoward contingency, he went up to her as she lay prostrate before the image, reproved her sharply, and told her if her conscience reproached her at all, she might confess to him and not repeat the act if she did not think proper, for she was free either to do it or not without sin. The silly nun, thinking to expiate her sin, confessed to the monk, and all the penance he imposed on her was to swear that it was no sin in her to love, and that some holy water would be sufficient to wash out so trifling a peccadillo.

She believed him rather than God, and relapsed some time after. Finally she became pregnant, and her remorse was so great that she entreated the prioress to have that monk expelled, for she knew he was so crafty that he would not fail to seduce her. The prioress and the prior, who agreed together, treated her with contempt, and told her she was big enough to defend herself against a man, and that he of whom she spoke was a most excellent man. Urged at last by her remorse, she earnestly implored their leave to go to Rome, where she believed she should recover her virginity by confessing her sin at the Pope's feet. The prior and the prioress very willingly granted her request, liking better she should be a pilgrim contrary to the rule of her order than cloistered with the scruples she had. Fearing, too, lest in a fit of despair she should reveal the sort of life that was led there, they gave her money for her journey.

Now God so ordered it that the nun arrived in Lyon at the time when the Duchess of Alençon, who was afterwards Queen of Navarre, was secretly performing a novaine in the church of St. John with some of her women. One evening after vespers when that princess was kneeling before the crucifix, she heard some one going up the steps, and perceiving by the light of the lamp that it was a nun, the duchess withdrew to the corner of the altar to hear her devotions. The nun, thinking herself alone, knelt down, and, beating her breast, began to weep most piteously, crying constantly, "Alas, my God ! have pity on this poor sinner !" The duchess, wishing to know what was the matter, went up to her, and said, "What is the matter, my dear ? Whence come you, and who brought you here ?"

The poor nun, who did not know her, replied, "Alas, my dear ! my misfortune is so great that I have recourse only to God, whom I beseech with all my heart to enable me to speak to Madame d'Alençon ; for I can relate my misfortune to no one but her, being assured that if there be a remedy for it she will not fail to find it."

"My dear," said the duchess, "you may speak to me as you would to her, for I am a very great friend of hers."

"Pardon me," said the nun ; "none but herself shall ever know my secret."

The duchess then told her she might speak out, for she had found the person she wanted. The poor woman then fell at her feet, and after many tears and cries related her whole story. The duchess consoled her so well, that, without weakening her repentance, she sent her back to the priory with letters to the bishop of the place, ordering him to have that scandalous monk expelled.

I had this story from the duchess herself ; and you may see from it that Nomerfide's recipe is not good for all sorts of people, since this pair, who were touching and laying out a dead body, were not the more chaste for all that.*

"Here was an invention," said Hircan, "of which I do not suppose any one ever availed himself before : to talk of death and perform the actions of life."

* This novel is wanting in the first edition of the *Heptameron*.

"Sinning is not an action of life," observed Oisille, "for we know that sin produces death."

"Rely upon it," said Saffredent, "those poor people did not think of that point of theology. But as Lot's daughters made their father drunk in hopes of perpetuating the human race, so these good people wished to repair what death had spoiled, and to make a new body to replace that which death had taken away. So I see no harm in the matter except the tears of the poor nun, who wept without ceasing, and always returned to the cause of her tears."

"I have known many like her," said Hircan : "weeping for the sin, and at the same time laughing over the pleasure."

"I believe I know the persons to whom you allude," said Parlamente. "They have laughed long enough, methinks, to begin to cry."

"Say no more," said Hircan ; "the tragedy which began with laughter is not yet ended."

"To change the subject, then," rejoined Parlamente, "it strikes me that Dagoucin has not complied with the rule we laid down, which was to tell only laughable tales, whereas his is too piteous."

"You said," replied Dagoucin, "that we should relate only follies, and it seems to me I have not been unsuccessful in that way. But that we may hear a more agreeable one, I give my voice to Nomerfide, hoping that she will repair my fault."

"I have a tale ready," said Nomerfide, "which is worthy to follow yours, for it is about a monk and a dead body. Hearken then, if you please." *

* "Here end the tales and novels of the late Queen of Navarre, which is all that can be recovered of them."—*Edition of 1559, by Gruget.*

THE END.

